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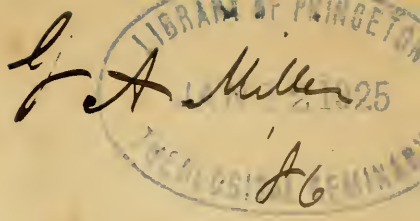

WORKS

OF THE LATE

REV. JAMES HAMILTON, D.D. F.L.S.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

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G Anderson Miller

G Anderson Miller

CONTENTS.

THE LIGHT TO THE PATH.

	PAGE
I.—THE BIBLE AND THE INQUIRER,	5
II.—THE BIBLE AND THE BELIEVER,	21
III.—THE BIBLE AND THE INVALID,	34
IV.—LESSONS IN THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE—THE CHEQUE AND THE COUNTERFOIL,	33
V.—LESSONS IN THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE—THE MOULD AND THE MEDALLION,	53
VI.—THE MUSTARD SEED; OR, THE GROWTH OF THE GOSPEL,	64
VII.—LEAVEN; OR, THE CIVILIZING INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY,	75
VIII.—THE LITERARY ATTRACTIONS OF THE BIBLE,	86
IX.—THE ILLUMINATED BIBLE AND THE LIVING EPISTLE,	116
X.—HINTS TO THE BIBLE STUDENT,	128

EMBLEMS FROM EDEN.

I.—THE TREE OF LIFE,	147
II.—THE VINE,	169
III.—THE CEDAR,	192
IV.—THE PALM,	211
V.—THE GARDEN ENCLOSED,	227
VI.—HARVEST HOME,	239
VII.—THE AMARANTH: OR, IMMORTALITY,	248

CONTENTS.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

	PAGE
I.—THE FATHERLAND,	261
II.—LEAVING HOME,	274
III.—THE FAR COUNTRY,	287
IV.—RIOTOUS LIVING,	300
V.—A MIGHTY FAMINE,	313
VI.—FEEDING SWINE,	325
VII.—A WISE RESOLUTION,	338
VIII.—A HAPPY MEETING,	351
IX.—THE BEST ROBE,	364
X.—THE FESTIVAL,	378
XI.—AN ANGRY BROTHER,	391
XII.—A RIGHTEOUS FATHER,	404

THE CHURCH IN THE HOUSE, ... 417

THE DEW OF HERMON; OR, THE TRUE SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN UNITY, ... 445

THANKFULNESS, ... 481

THE LIGHT TO THE PATH:

WHAT THE BIBLE HAS BEEN TO OTHERS, AND WHAT IT CAN DO FOR OURSELVES.

PREFACE.

TWELVE years ago the author published a small volume entitled *The Lamp and the Lantern: or, The Bible a Light to the Tent and the Traveller.* Appearing at the time when the Bible Society was holding its jubilee, it contained many things of which the interest has passed away, and which are omitted in the present edition. Their place is supplied by materials which, it is hoped, may possess more enduring value; and the writer takes advantage of the present opportunity to substitute for the original name a title less alliterative.

48 EUSTON SQUARE, *June* 1 1865.

CHAPTER I.

THE BIBLE AND THE INQUIRER.

A FATHER and a son were on a journey. It was late in the afternoon, but still clear day, when they came to a cottage by the road-side, and the father went in and borrowed a lighted lantern. The young man was exceedingly amused, and perhaps he was a little vexed. If any one should meet them carrying a lamp in the sunshine it would look so absurd; and what in the world was the use of it? But the older traveller took the young man's gibes good-humouredly, and only answered, "The night cometh." And it did come. They passed no more cottages, but they got into a thick forest, where the daylight faded so rapidly that the lantern already shone a welcome companion. Not only was the sun gone down, but the last streak of twilight had vanished. It was dreadfully dark; but the good little lantern spread a cloth of gold before the steps of the travellers, and did not let one shadow or phantom come near them. At last the road divided. "Straight on!" cried the youth. "Not so fast," said the elder; for though the path to the right was less trodden, perhaps it was the one they should take; when fortunately they espied a finger-post, and holding the lamp

as high as they could, they read the direction, and found that they would have gone utterly wrong had they not taken the narrow and neglected footway. Rejoicing at their escape, they pushed on merrily; and by and by with his frisky spirits the youngster went ahead, and was far in advance of the lantern, when the old man heard a plash and a shout, and running up, was just in time to help ashore his impetuous boy, who had soused into a stagnant pool, and who crawled up the bank pale and shivering, with the leeches and duckweed clinging to his garments. "You see the road was not through this pool, but round it. You should walk in the light;" and so they again set out together. As the stillness deepened, they sometimes heard a rustle in the bushy undergrowth, and distant howlings or a sharp snarl near-hand warned them that the beasts of the forest were abroad; and once or twice they could see a pair of fiery opals glaring at them, but as soon as they turned the full flame of the lantern in that direction the goblin retreated. We need not tell the whole adventures of the night; but at last they came to a place where a heavy moan arrested them, and searching in the copse, they found a man stretched on the ground and badly hurt. He had either received a blow on the head, or he had inhaled some stupefying ether, for at first he talked very incoherently. It turned out, that as he had been coming along, a gentleman in black had prevailed on him to cast his lantern into the ditch, and that soon after some footpad had knocked him down and dragged him off the road and robbed him of all his money. As soon as he was somewhat restored, they set him on his beast, and

journeyed on together. The day was breaking, and the forest was thinning off on the margin of a magnificent domain. They looked forth on vine-clad hills and a shining river; and though the palace itself could be descried but dimly,—it was so far up in the dazzling sunrise,—they could easily make out many mansions. "I am home!" cried the old man; and the full morning was reflected from his face as he added, "Mine eyes shall see the king in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off." And as he embraced his comrades, he handed over the lantern to his son, and said, "Keep this as a light unto your feet, and a lamp unto your path." The youth prized the keepsake. He found constant occasion for it. He brightened up the four windows, by which it sent its light backward and forward, and on either side; and with the point of a diamond he traced these mottoes on them :—

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word."

"When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee: and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light."

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the daystar arise in your hearts."

"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"

A lamp lighted while it is yet day,—such a lamp as is let into the roof of a railway carriage, and the little child wonders why they should put it there at noon, but for which no one is more grateful when a few minutes afterwards they plunge into the tunnel; such a lantern as the prudent traveller provides before he is benighted,—such a lamp is no bad emblem of our own case in relation to the Bible. God has provided us with a sufficient guide to a blissful immortality. His Word is a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path. In Britain, throughout Protestant Europe, in the whole of North America, there is hardly any one who may not, if he chooses, find and keep that path of faith and holiness which leads to heaven. But few set out on the great pilgrimage whilst the daylight lasts. It is not till all around is growing dark, that they remember that this is not their rest, and that they have a city still to seek. It is not till shadows from the tomb, or conscious guilt, or clouds of grief enwrap them, that they find they must sport no longer. And as they grasp their staff, and gird their loins, they bless that wonderful goodness which has already furnished them with a light so clear and unquenchable. In their merry moments they paid no attention to it. They hardly knew that it was burning. Now they are astonished at its brightness. The intenser that the shadow grows, the more dazzling does it shine; and now that neither sun nor stars appear,—now that the glare of folly or the glee of health has faded,—they find to their surprise, that their route is becoming plainer, and their spirit waxing stronger; for, as if instinctively aspiring back to the "perfect day" from which

it came, the lamp burns brighter and yet brighter as they go.

"Young man, attend to the voice of one who has possessed a certain degree of fame in the world, and who will shortly appear before his Maker. Read the Bible every day of your life." So said Dr. Johnson to a young gentleman who visited him on his death-bed; and so has many a pastor said to his young people,—so has many a dying parent said to his children. And if it were from a minister, or some venerable Christian friend that you heard such counsel, you received it respectfully; if it were from a dying father or mother, with tears you promised to comply. Have you forgotten? Have you wearied in well-doing? Have late hours or other pursuits supplanted the Word of God? No: you say that you read it still. But you read it as a task. You would be glad of a dispensation. You would be thankful for a release which would not hurt your conscience, or impeach your filial piety. You carry about the lantern, because you would deem it a profanity or a breach of promise to cast it away. But hitherto you have found no real occasion for it; and it would not be honest to say that you have used it as a light to your feet, for you have never sought nor followed its guidance.

And yet, dear friend, God can soon make that Bible precious. He can send a dangerous sickness; and when you are amusing yourself with a novel or a game of cards, the doctor may come in, and after he is gone your friends are agitated; your sister looks pale, her eyelids are moist, her cheerfulness is forced; and it all comes out: You are

never to get better,—you have sentence of death in yourself. And, after the first flutter of surprise, you push away the novel or the cards, and you say, "Bring me my Bible." Or you went to church one Sunday, and God's Word found you out. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." "He that believeth shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be damned." You heard something which made you feel that if you continue as you are, it would have been better for you never to be born. You grew dull and moody; but, after a few rebellious strugglings, your spirit was subdued. You saw yourself in a new light, and that holy law of God which you have been all your life transgressing. You felt that you had done wickedly, and that you were truly vile. And in this humble frame of mind you took up the Testament, and, as well as you could recall them, you turned to those passages which tell the grace of the Lord Jesus, or which announce God's pardoning mercy. What it was that caught your eye at last we do not know; but it caught your heart as well; for you were presently on your knees, with tears of surprise and thankfulness drenching the open volume, and sobbing out your praises to Him "who forgiveth all your iniquities, and crowneth you with loving-kindness and tender mercies." And ever since, notwithstanding many decays and declensions, you have been a very different reader and hearer of the Word from what you were before.

It is by making the heart soft or the spirit serious, that God makes His own Word precious. It was in this way that several of the French prisoners in England, during the war with Napoleon, to all of whom copies of the Scriptures were offered, came under its subduing and renovating influence. In the absence of amusement, and with nothing to excite them, many of them beguiled occasional hours of captivity with a book, which in the bustle of the camp they would never have dreamed of opening. They learned from it a secret which reconciled them to many a privation, and which sent more than one of them back to France enriched with the pearl of great price. It is thus that many a convict has had cause to acknowledge with gratitude the timely detection which brought him acquainted with God's Word, and which, making him a new creature, admitted to the fellowship of saints the outcast of society. And it is thus that many a man has had reason to adore that gracious, though for the moment mysterious, sovereignty, which stripped him of his wealth, or deprived him of his dearest friend, or left him for life a shattered invalid; but which, in the same dispensation, taught him to cry, "The judgments of the Lord are more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold." "I am a stranger in the earth; hide not thy commandments from me." "I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes."

It does not matter what has been the sobering or softening influence. It does not matter whether there has been some striking providence, or whether, from causes which you can hardly specify, you have been brought to

unwonted solicitude about the one thing needful. There is One Being with whom, if your relations are right, nothing need greatly disquiet you; and there is only one document which can inform you how with Him right relations may be secured and maintained. This is the peculiar value of Scripture, that to the question which Nature only answers by dim hieroglyphics or brilliant paradoxes, its reply is articulate and authoritative; and on the problem, which reason could not meet even by approximation, it sheds the light of a simple and exhaustive solution. To the question, "What is God?" it answers,—not space,—not nature,—not the universe,—not merely the Great First Cause; but it answers, Jehovah: Jehovah all-sufficient: the Lord Almighty: that living and personal God whose justice and benevolence are as infinite as His wisdom and power, and who does not embark vaster resources or a stronger interest in the framing of a world than He can afford for the welfare and enjoyment of some one like yourself, created after His own image, and of whose spirit He claims to be the Father. And to the further question, "What are the dispositions of this God, so just and benevolent, so wise and mighty,—what are His dispositions to a sinner like me?" it answers, "Merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." But comforting as this assurance is, it is not conclusive: and till the final query is met,—till you know what to do so as to attract towards yourself God's mercy rather than His justice,—general information as to the Divine generosity and goodness can give you no absolute confidence God-ward. It is here that the Scrip-

ture comes forth with its specific announcement, and meets the soul longing for God's friendship with its welcome oracle. God has sent forth His Son to redeem and retrieve lost sinners of our race. The expiator for our guilt, and, if resorted to, the intercessor for our souls, as willing as He is worthy, the Son of God is man's Saviour; and to plead His atonement,—to cling in grateful dependence to His cross,—is the same thing as to see our name in Life's Book, our soul in Life's Bundle. God loves the Saviour, and to those who receive Him He gives power to become sons of God. Sin is perdition, but the antidote of sin is the merits of the Saviour. Sin is perdition, but union to Christ is salvation.

As the present remarks are chiefly designed for those who are just making a commencement in religion, or who are only thinking about it, we shall conclude with a few words to those who feel some interest in the subject, but who have not yet come to a plenary persuasion that the Scriptures are the Word of God; and to those to whom the subject itself is distasteful, for they despise or dislike that great salvation which the Scriptures reveal.

1. You feel an interest in religion, but you are not sure that you have found a revelation. And if there were only time, you could mention a great many difficulties *in* the Book and *about* the Book which have hitherto prevented you from receiving the Bible as the undoubted Word of God. And you want to know, "What am I to do? I cannot love Christ, till I am convinced of the facts concerning Him; and I shall not be convinced till once I am

furnished with conclusive evidence. I assure you that I am in earnest, but I am not convinced. Where shall I find the evidence?"

Permit us then to ask: If a doctrine were holy, and if predictions were uttered, and miracles were wrought in its behalf, would you not believe that holy doctrine thus attested to be truly Divine? Based on such prophecies and miracles, would you not feel that it rested directly on the omniscience and omnipotence of God? But with Jews still in the world, and with their Old Testament the same as our own, do you not believe that the Old Testament prophecies were uttered long before the appearance of Jesus Christ? And from the proofs of their sincerity given by the apostles do you not believe that the miracles which they have recorded in the New Testament are true? In other words, do you not believe that as the fulfilment of so many prophecies and the fountain of so many miracles, Jesus Christ was all that He claimed to be, and which His first disciples died declaring,—the Son of God and the Saviour of men?

Then again, on the Saviour's authority and from the wonderful fulfilment of their prophecies, do you not believe that the books of the Old Testament are inspired? On the strength of Christ's promises and their own frequent assertions, do you not believe that the apostles were divinely commissioned to unfold the Christian doctrine more fully to the world? And on the testimony of friends and foes from the first century downwards, from the impossibility of forgery, and on their internal evidence, do you not believe that the books of the New Testament are the

writings of Christ's apostles? And believing all this, do you not actually concede that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the Word of God?[1]

In a matter of such moment we do not deprecate the utmost caution; but at the same time, in a matter of such urgency you should not grudge the utmost diligence. It is the turn of your mind to "prove all things," and, like that most sagacious of animals which will not cross a bridge till it has tested its strength,—you say that you can adventure no interest except on a well-proven conclusion. So be it; but at the same time remember that this is no holiday excursion, but a life or death retreat,—an escape for dear existence. Remember that betwixt this islet which you occupy and a blissful immortality,—betwixt mortal life and eternal glory, if this bridge be not trustworthy, there is not any other. Your choice is small. It is not, Which of many? It is not even, Which of two? But it is, This or none! You are in the predicament of a castaway, who finds himself on a dry sandbank surrounded by a rising tide. There were only a few furlongs of it at the first, and already it is half submerged, when the people on the shore espy him and send a boat to bring him off. But he cavils at its construction. He doubts if it is safe. He questions if it will ever get to land. Nay, he has strong suspicions that there is no land at all. But what do you intend to do? There is nothing else in sight —neither sail nor steam. And you have not long to

[1] By such a process of successive inferences a most accomplished student describes himself as conducted to the threshold of that faith, which became the joy and rejoicing of his heart.—*Memoir of Rev. J. Brown Patterson*, pp. 152, 153.

hesitate. Your bank grows less. The waters rise. They soon will swell up to the brim, and the place that knows you now will not know you to-morrow. You might have trusted us: for all this trouble was taken, not to destroy one who is drowning at any rate, but with the hope of saving you.

You say that you are sincere and earnest. We rejoice to hear it; for in that event it is no uncertain issue. Doubtless, there is an earnestness which prevents people from deriving the full comfort from the most abundant and overwhelming evidence; just as a man's anxiety for his own or his children's safety may make him question the seaworthiness of a first-class vessel. In the present case few are rendered nervous by inordinate anxiety: far more continue sceptical, or languidly assenting, because their solicitude is only a troubled sleep—a half-awakened apathy. If you are only sufficiently in earnest, your doubts will soon dispel. In His Word God has not left Himself without a witness. The strongest consolation in this world is theirs who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel, and the most rational of men is the believer in Jesus.

To every man who is really earnest, the Bible, sooner or later, commends itself as the Word of the true and holy God; and its pre-eminent revelation, the gospel, commends itself as the wisdom and the power of God. It is no true earnestness which does not make men candid; and in the case of Christianity candour is the high-road to conviction. A guileful heart may be superstitious, and the evil heart of unbelief may be strangely credulous; but

it is the heart which God himself makes "honest" which yields to evidence, and which, when God speaks, instinctively trembles at the Word—which, when God shines forth, immediately rejoices and adores. "From me Christ required no miracles as witnesses of His truth; He Himself, His life, His thoughts, His actions, towered above the mist of centuries,—the one perpetual miracle of history, the holy ideal of a perfect humanity." Such was the deliverance of a late popular Swiss author:[1] and the same self-evidencing power of the Scriptures has been thus described by a man of science at Strasburg:[2]—"A single book has saved me; but that book is not of human origin. Long had I despised it, long had I deemed it a class-book for the credulous and ignorant; until, having investigated the gospel of Christ, with an ardent desire to ascertain its truth, or falsity, its pages proffered to my inquiries the sublimest knowledge of man and nature, and the simplest, and, at the same time, the most exalted, system of ethics. Faith, hope, and charity were enkindled in my bosom; and every advancing step strengthened me in the conviction that the morals of this book are as superior to human morals, as its oracles are superior to human opinions."

The fact is, when a man holds out his lantern, and asks you if there is a light in it, you may be able to convince him that there is; but the very circumstance of his asking such a question makes you fear that he is blind; and at all events five minutes of clear vision would be worth a world of your arguments. When a man asks, Do you think the Bible is inspired? is it really the light of God

[1] Zchokke. [2] Professor Bautain.

which is shining there? you may prove it by unanswerable argument; and yet you cannot help regretting that he should need to appeal to others; nor can you help remembering how it stands written, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them; for they are spiritually discerned."[1] To any one who finds himself in this predicament, the best advice we can give is, Read and pray. Yes, read and pray. Pray, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." And as you pray this prayer, read the book, and ponder its sayings; and better feelings will spring up in your mind—holy thoughts and loving, grateful thoughts towards Christ, kind thoughts towards your fellows, devout and contrite thoughts towards God. "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes:" and it opens the eyes by rejoicing the heart.[2] You cannot be long in wistful contact with it without imbibing some of its hallowing influence. You cannot look long at the lamp till its own quickening radiance has opened your eyes. Whilst to its sure word you are still taking heed, the day will dawn and the day-star arise in your heart.

2. Dear reader, it is a solemn thing to be intrusted with these lively oracles. That Bible is a sacred book. It is God's angel, either hospitably lodged or ignominiously neglected in our homes. May that messenger of God's mercy never prove, through mal-treatment, the recorder of our guilt, and the fatal witness against our

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 14. [2] Psalm xix. 8.

wilful impenitence and reprobate mind! For whether or not we open the Bible to ascertain God's present will concerning us, it is one of the books which shall be opened, and by which our lot shall be fixed, when He comes to decide our final destiny. We are not done with it. We must meet it yet again. Before the great reckoning day there will be an end of most human authorship; and, except as the good or evil which they have done may rise up to bless or condemn the writers, no more will be heard of them. But when all other books are forgotten, when these heavens and this earth have passed away, not a jot nor a tittle of God's Word shall have perished; but by the light of the Great White Throne we shall read the self-same pages which we so often turned over in our earthly dwellings. Oh that we could occasionally read these Scriptures with that impression on our minds: —This is the Word of God which endureth for ever. When I awake on the resurrection morning I shall see few of the things with which I am now familiar. My house and my lands will not be worth a day's purchase then, and gold and precious stones may be had for the gathering: but the soul will be worth exactly what the Bible declared:—it will be cheap could it be bought with a whole world. The comrades whose smile of connivance or whose drunken plaudits used to embolden me in sin, will not avail me when I stand confronted with a holy God; but just as the Bible has said I shall find it,— "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished." The systems of philosophy, and the different forms of human religion, will melt in the midst of that

great unveiling; and the popular opinion may turn out a grand illusion: but in the new heavens and the new earth I shall recognise the same Jehovah, and shall read the same grand principles of right and wrong with which I was brought acquainted when a child in the Sabbath-school. Yes, names and notions written in the earth must corrode, and crumble, and pass away; the earth itself must melt in fervent heat, and revive in a new creation; but Christ's words shall never pass away. Nay, in their lonely and majestic surviving they shall seem to absorb all other words into themselves; and as I read the flame-bright legends on the tables of eternity, amidst the wreck of all besides, Revelation will stand out the great reality; and I shall feel the responsibility which, in his retrospect of the "Course of Time," the poet ascribes to the possessors of this volume:—

> "They had the Bible. Hast thou ever heard
> Of such a book?—The author God himself.
> The subject God and man; salvation, life
> And death—eternal life, eternal death!
> Most wondrous book! bright candle of the Lord!
> Star of eternity!—the only star
> By which the barque of man could navigate
> The sea of time, and gain the coast of life securely.
> This book,—this holiest, this sublimest book,
> Was sent—heaven's will, heaven's code of laws entire—
> To man: this book contained, defined the bounds
> Of vice and virtue, and of life and death;
> And what was shadow, what was substance taught."

CHAPTER II.

THE BIBLE AND THE BELIEVER.

In the spring of 1817, there used to meet together in a large saloon at Geneva, from twenty to thirty students. Some of them were ardent and accomplished young men, and all of them were aspirants to the Christian ministry. But at that time little faith was found in Geneva. The city of Calvin and Beza was under the spell of Voltaire and Rousseau, and in the christened Paganism of its Theological Academy, "St. Plato and St. Seneca" had supplanted St. Paul and St. Peter. These young men assembled every alternate evening, and took their places at a long table, on which lay the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, with many versions, German, French, and English. In this little college, the professor was a retired naval officer from Britain. He was a grave and thoughtful man. He had gained his ascendency over his scholars by the interest which he manifested in their future ministry. They had no idea that the pastorate was such a responsible and weighty office; but as he spoke so seriously about the thousands of souls of which they were soon to have oversight, the solemnity of the

stranger solemnized themselves. They were now searching the Scriptures daily, on purpose to ascertain the truth of God: and as unheard-of doctrines, such as human corruption, the incarnation, justification by the righteousness of another, one by one came forth from the open volume, great was the astonishment of these youthful "Bereans." Of course, many difficulties were felt, and not a few objections and cavils were started; but it was only by comparing scripture with scripture, that Mr. Haldane explained or defended its statements. "There it stands, written with the finger of God," was the end of the matter; nor was there any question on which texts did not occur instant and apposite to this "living concordance." As the result, almost every one of these students became a distinguished evangelist; and in the persons of men like Gonthier and Rieu and Merle D'Aubigné, many dark places in France, Belgium, and Switzerland, were penetrated by the light of the gospel; nor is it saying too much to affirm, that, through the Evangelical Society in which it ended, the whole of French-speaking Europe is destined to feel the effects of that season's earnest Bible-searching."[1]

The Bible is the book out of which every reformation of doctrine has issued, and every revival of religion. And whether we are called to be the instructors of others, or are only desiring security and precision to our own system, we cannot do better than resort at once to the oracle.

[1] See *The Lives of Robert and James Alexander Haldane*, chap. xviii.

Or, as is still more likely, if any one of us has notions indefinite or undecided on some important article, he cannot do better than study that portion of Scripture in which it is especially treated. Is it the person of Christ on which you long for clearer light? Do you want to know whether He is Divine, and whether without idolatry you may give Him not only love and gratitude, but adoration and worship? Then read the books of St. John. Is it the great atonement on which you desire to be more fully informed? Do you wish to know the exact function which the great High Priest discharges, —whether His "finished" work be an exclusive and exhaustive expiation for sins, or a sacrifice requiring constant repetitions, and originating a new sacerdotal order? Then read the Epistle to the Hebrews. Or is it on the doctrine of justification that you covet more precise and thorough instruction? Do you seek to know where God would have you rest your hope of heaven? whether it is your faith, or your feelings, or your improving self, that He would have you trust,—or His own dear Son the Saviour! Then read the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians. Whatever be the point on which you would know the mind of God, you will find some portion of His Word which gives forth the Divine deliverance; and when that portion is illustrated and confirmed by appropriate parallels, your faith will stand not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God.

However, to regard the Book as a mere oracle giving forth responses on doctrinal questions, is a cold theory of

Scripture. The poet[1] tells how he "shot an arrow into the air," and owing to the swiftness of its flight he lost it. In like manner, he adds—

> "I breathed a song into the air;
> It fell to earth, I knew not where.
> Long, long afterward in an oak
> I found the arrow still unbroke:
> And the song, from beginning to end,
> I found again in the heart of a friend."

Such recoveries and recognitions of one's thoughts are always pleasant. You had forgotten the saying; but months afterward some one tells you how to him it had proved such a word in season. You have no remembrance of having ever met this prosperous merchant; but he asks, "Do you not recollect the advice you gave a young man, who brought you a letter of introduction from such a friend twenty years ago?—advice which I followed, and here I am." Nor does anything delight you more, than to find that you are so loved by another that he acts on your wishes, and you constantly see carried out in his silent proceedings, requests or suggestions of your own. If the most delicate token of affection, this is also the most decisive. It proves that you live in the heart of your friend; and that, seen or not seen, you are truly dear to him.

God's bow is never bent at a venture. He never loses sight of His arrows. No word of His ever misses its mark, but each accomplishes its purpose. And yet it is not the less a joy to Him when that word finds a welcome, and of all men he is to the Most High the dearest,

[1] Longfellow.

in whose affections God's words are hidden the most deeply, and in whose conduct they most conspicuously reappear.

Perhaps it will be brought still nearer to our apprehension if we recall the saying of the Saviour, "If ye abide in me, and *my words abide in you*, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love."[1] In the heart of Immanuel were hidden all the desires and commandments of the Father; and to carry them into effect was the labour of love which gave unity and grandeur to His entire incarnate history. And it was this which drew towards Him the perpetual complacency of His heavenly Father. On the one side, the obedience of His beloved Son was an incense ever ascending through the sin-laden atmosphere of earth; and, on the other side, the Father's recognition of that obedience was a blessing constantly returning,—dispelling in some degree the miasma of the curse, and opening through our murky air streaks of that sapphire which formed the firmament of an untainted Paradise. And just as it was by keeping the Father's commandments that the Son abode in the Father's love, so it is by keeping the Saviour's commandments that He tells us we shall abide in the Saviour's love. Nay, if Christ's word abide in us, we shall come to such a blessed unison,—our will shall be in such harmony with His, and such a delight shall it be to Him to show His love to His disciple, that

[1] John xv. 7, 10.

"we shall ask what we will, and it shall be done unto us."

The Saviour desires our love. He desires to live in our grateful affection. And just as whatever we do in remembrance of Him, helps to endear Him to us, so the more richly that His word dwells in us, the dearer are we to Himself.

Wherever such a word is acted out, the soul is at once made happier and stronger. It is instantly brought nearer to that Divine Friend whose promise is thus trusted, or whose wishes are thus fulfilled: and as an inevitable consequence, it receives an augmentation of spiritual vigour, and is better able to believe the next true saying, or to do the next right thing.

A little girl, ten years of age, who had long been nursing a sick sister, and whose mother was in feeble health, was getting quite worn out. One morning as she trudged along to procure medicine,—as she thought how hard it was to be always waiting on the invalid when other children were at play: and then, when she thought how likely it was that her sister would die,—betwixt weariness and grief she began to weep bitterly. But a sudden thought crossed her mind. Her tears were dried, and her step grew light and nimble. After she returned, noticing how cheerfully she went about her work, and how briskly and easily she did it, her mother asked the reason. It turned out that the verse had come into her memory, "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." Day and night thenceforward she never wearied in her attendance on the in-

valid. Her cheerful countenance did more good than any medicine. And ere long she had her reward, for her sister recovered.[1]

Mr. Simeon, of Cambridge, was at one time an object of much contempt for Christ's sake and the gospel. And though usually he bore up bravely, it was very trying to know that nobody liked to be seen in his company: and one day as he walked along with his little Testament in his hand, he prayed that God would send him some cordial in His Word. Opening the book his eye alighted on the text, "They found a man of Cyrene, Simon (or Simeon) by name; him they compelled to bear Jesus' cross." "And when I read that," he tells us, "I exclaimed, 'Lord, lay it on me: lay it on me; I will gladly bear the cross for Thy sake.' And I henceforth bound persecution as a wreath of glory round my brow."[2]

In the Tower of London you have read the verse inscribed by one of the bloody Mary's prisoners, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." And you remember how it is related of the Nonconformist, Mr. Lawrence, of Baschurch, that when some one reminded him that he had eleven good arguments against giving up his living, and asked him how he meant to maintain his wife and ten children, he answered, "They must all live on the sixth of Matthew, 'Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? but seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.'"

[1] *The Holy Scriptures* (Tract Society Anecdotes)—where many interesting facts are collected.

[2] Simeon's *Life*, p. 676.

And countless instances might be quoted, where, to every range of intellect, from the little child up to the learned philosopher, and in all emergencies, from a matter of daily routine up to a question of life or death, the all-fitting and all-foreseeing Word of Christ has been the antidote of temptation, the incentive to duty, the joy in tribulation. On its nail fastened in a sure place thousands have suspended their earthly future as well as their eternal all, and they have not been confounded. With its sword turning either way they have put to flight armies of doubts and fears, and whole legions of Satanic suggestions. Times without number on the guilty conscience or the troubled spirit has a healing leaf descended, fresh from the Tree of Life, and charmed into the evening's ecstasy the morning's anguish. None of that Word shall return to the Great Speaker "void;" for according to their various faith or susceptibility, absorbed into the soul of disciples, it will outlive the most enduring of tablets, and outshine the most brilliant of transcripts; and although every Bible should perish, the whole of Christ's sayings might be recovered from His living epistles. They might all be collected again in the hearts of Christ's friends.

All flesh is grass, and the grave is fast filling with great authors. Once they are there, praise cannot flatter them, affection cannot cheer them. And, except that small number whose "works do follow them," they may either be ignorant of the influence which they are exerting in the land of the living, or they would rather that they did not know. But the Author of the Bible lives. The Saviour, whose sayings it perpetuates, lives. The Holy

Spirit, who taught the men of God to write it, lives. It is a joy to the Lord Jesus when any saying of His finds a frank believer or a cheerful doer. It is a gladness to the Spirit of Grace when those pure loving words of His refine a coarse nature, or persuade a stubborn will, or heal a broken heart. It is a delight to the Most High when His own truth credited leads any soul to regard Him trustfully and loyally, and to cry to Him, Abba,—our Father who art in heaven. The Author of the Bible is not like one who publishes a great book, and so far as he is concerned its influence is posthumous : but he is rather like one who sends a letter into your dwelling and awaits its result. He is rather like one who has indited a volume with an eye expressly to your benefit, and who finds his joy fulfilled and his purpose answered when you begin to bend to its reasonings, to mould your life on its maxims, to fill your soul with its inspiring motives. Under God's eye read God's own Book, and pray for that Comforter's teaching who can make the literal Scripture a living message and a transforming power. Then,—when your principles and rules of action are derived from this celestial source, you will understand how a man by becoming truly scriptural becomes "a temple of the Holy Ghost." And, if you cannot say it yourself, when Christ's Word dwells in you richly, you will understand how another could say it, "I live, yet not I : Christ liveth in me." Believing God's truth and receiving God's Spirit, as long as the Lord lives you need never want a friend, nor as long as He has a cause in the world, need you ever want a pursuit.

As we said in the last chapter, it is the darkness which makes the lantern so welcome. And it is the darkness of the sick-room or the house of mourning in which this "Night-lamp"[1] emits such a soft and heavenly radiance. You will find it so. Fond as you are of books, there is only one that you will value at last: with your head on the pillow you will hardly care to be told that a new volume of the Great History is published, or a marvellous epic out-peering all its predecessors. "No; read me the twenty-third Psalm. Let me hear the fourteenth of John." When your strength sinks yet lower,—when your interest in all under the sun has faded away, and ebbing life affords not even a parting tear,—it will for a moment rally the worn faculties to hear the whisper, "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." And when all is over, when to orphan children and desolate kindred the world is grown a great sepulchre, and the most tender friends are vain comforters; when letters of condolence lie unopened, and words of compassion fall like hailstones on the heart,—the first thing which sends a warm ray into the gloom, and brings to the eye tears that are not bitter, is when Jesus himself breaks the silence, and you hear, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

[1] The appropriate name of a very edifying narrative of a sister's last days, by Dr. John Macfarlane.

"What are these who are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

By the confession of the world's own poet, "Christianity is the religion of the sorrowful."[1] Nothing can be truer. Christ is indeed the mourner's Friend. Christ's Word is the "Afflicted Man's Companion." And if any humane spirit would like to mitigate the distresses of his brethren; if you would fain be a son of consolation to the sons of sorrow, the kindest thing you can do is to conduct them to this source of perennial comfort. The world is full of sufferers: and if you do not meet them in the streets, city missionaries and others will soon direct you to their dwellings. There, or in the public hospital, you will find them, bedrid, consumptive, palsy-stricken, blind, wasting away in direful diseases; and what can you do for them? What can philosophy do? What can mere human philanthropy do? The one would discourse on the pain-conquering power of a resolute will, or would expatiate on the lot of mortality:—as if writhing anguish could be

[1] Moore in *The Epicurean.*

mesmerized by stoic saws, or a fever could be cured by fatalism. And the other, wiser and kinder, would seek for the tossing sufferer better attendance, or purer air, or a less uneasy couch; but it is a short limit to which when humanity has gone, it can go no further. The best skill cannot cure old age; the rarest cordial cannot tempt the sickly palate; the purest air, the softest couch, the kindest nursing cannot conjure into health those that are doomed to die. But in His mercy God has provided an assuagement for such misery,—an effectual antidote to the worst ingredient in the cup of woe. Visiting your poor neighbour, you will probably find that antidote already in the house, but its value is still unknown. It is your privilege to be the ministering angel, and to point out to the dying Hagar the hidden well. Putting into the words as much of Christ's own tenderness and kindness as you can, you read or repeat some appropriate passage; and, just as the scanty strength can bear it, you add here a little and there a little, and renew your visits till, in an arrested ear and opening heart, God crowns your love and answers your prayers. And those only who have seen it can tell the difference between the sick-chamber where there is no hope, and one lit up with immortality—between the dull endurance or the rebellious resistance of the stricken transgressor, and the patient cheerfulness and prophetic joy of a Lazarus, whose sorry couch is spread in glory's vestibule. So that next to his highest service who preoccupies with scriptural principle a healthful youthful neighbour, and who thus secures for society a Christian citizen, as well as for heaven a meet inheritor,—is his

visit of mercy who carries to the abodes of wretchedness the tidings of great joy, and who, with the help of the Holy Spirit, reveals the secret which makes the worst pain tolerable, and the sorest affliction joyful,—which beguiles with songs the longest night, and teaches the man of sorrow alway to triumph through Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER III.

THE BIBLE AND THE INVALID.

SALMASIUS was perhaps the most learned man in all the seventeenth century. He had read not only books, but libraries; and yet, when he came to die, it was his bitter exclamation, "Oh, I have lost a world of time! Had I but one year longer, it should be spent in reading David's Psalms and Paul's Epistles." Wheresoever the Bible may be despised, it is sure of a respectful welcome in the sick-room; and however stalwart the intellect, however sturdy the gait of healthy days may have been, there is no comfort in the valley without the sustaining of this staff. Some Christians stand forth from their fellows, conspicuous for moral energy or mental vigour; but in those solemn hours, there is nothing left for any but to fall back on the faithful saying. There have been few braver spirits than John Knox; few steadier thinkers than John Foster; but the biographer of the latter tells us, that "during the last two or three days of his life, the Scriptures (chiefly the Psalms) were by his own desire exclusively read to him;" and when Knox was laid on his death-bed, along with other portions, he made his attendants read to him every day the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah and the seventeenth of John.

The late Mrs. Isabella Graham of New York had compiled for her own use a little collection of scriptures and hymns, which she entitled "Provision for my Last Journey through the Wilderness, and Passage over Jordan." And whether collected into a manual or not, it is well to have at command those portions of the Word which, thoroughly trusted in the faintest hour, will be "everlasting arms" around the spirit. For such purposes none are so suitable as the simplest announcements of God's forgiving and fatherly mercy,—those gospels of His grace which constitute the pre-eminence and the charm of the scriptural revelation. Short and plain, they are divinely adapted to the languid powers of sickness; or should there be a capacity for more sustained attention, the gentle words of the Saviour, and the soft breathings of the psalmist, will fall on the ear more soothingly than the accents of the most tender human comforter.

However, the sickness may not be "unto death;" at least so gentle is its progress, and so slowly do its stages succeed one another, that the house appointed for all living is a terminus far off and rarely remembered. You have little pain; you are only very feeble? Or, you have paroxysms of severe suffering, but with long intervals of ease? You hope to get better? Or, you fear that you will not? We do not know how it is with the frail body; only you are an invalid. And in that circumstance you have a special call to acquaint yourself with the Word of God; and for attaining this acquaintance you have a great advantage. God in His providence is now saying, "Arise; this is not your rest;" and by secluding you

from distracting occupations or giddy friends, He is giving you a rare opportunity to commence that acquaintance with Himself which will make you blessed now and ever.

In his old age Carsten Niebuhr, the great traveller, was blind; but, as he lay on his bed or reposed in his easy-chair, his face would be often luminous with an inward joy. He was meditating on the splendid scenes which he had so often viewed in the sunny Eastern land: and as its glowing landscapes and its brilliant starry vault rose again from the depths of his memory, he feared for them no eclipse, and never missed the flat marshes of Holstein. And so, dear reader, should God open your eyes to the wonders of His Word, you will not be resourceless though all other joys are cut off. You will grow intimate with patriarchs, and apostles, and other noble acquaintances whose names are in the Book, and whose present abode is in the many mansions. You will get to know a Friend whose earthly history is in the Book, and whose present home is at the right hand of the Father;—a Friend who, when the midnight taper reveals nothing save an empty room, is still so nigh that He can hear your softest whisper: and were you breathing forth your spirit in the silence, would bear it instantly to the bosom of immortality, and introduce it to the white-robed company. You will become familiar with the New Jerusalem, and the tree of life, and the pearly gates, and the crystal river. And, mayhap, as you meditate on these, and as you essay to think on the glorious perfections of the great I AM, and as you muse on the paradise that

was, and on the new earth that is coming, and as precious promises crowd round you, each with an earnest in its arms,—amidst the bliss of believing God's truth and the joy of enduring God's will, you may get such songs in the night as never were heard in the halls of the worldling, and the visions of God will eclipse all the pageants of time.

So was it with a happy sufferer whose history we lately read. Poor and dependent, for six-and-thirty years the victim of incurable maladies, often undergoing excruciating agony, sometimes for a lengthened period blind, few have experienced the exquisite enjoyment of which her shattered tenement was the habitual abode. As she wrote to a friend, "My nights are very pleasant in general. I feel like David when he said, 'I wait for the Lord; my soul doth wait: and in His Word do I hope.' And while I am enabled to contemplate the wonders of redeeming grace and love, the hours pass swiftly on, and the morn appears even before I am aware." "I experience so much of the Saviour's love in supporting me under pain, that I cannot fear its increase." Once, when a lady, shuddering at the spectacle of her sufferings, said that if called to endure such pain herself her faith must fail, Harriet quoted the text, "Strengthened with all might, unto all long-suffering with joyfulness," and added, "Yes: and I think this is one end to be answered in my long afflictions—*encouragement* for others to trust in Him. This precious Book is my constant companion, and its truths and promises my unfailing support."[1]

[1] *Gold Tried in the Fire: a Memoir of Harriet Stoneman.*

CHAPTER IV.

LESSONS IN THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE: I. THE CHEQUE AND THE COUNTERFOIL.

THERE are many ways in which intelligent readers have come to the conclusion that the books of Scripture are genuine, that their narrative is authentic, and that the message which they carry to mankind is indeed the Word of the living God. Some of these proofs require a certain amount of erudition in order to feel their force, or considerable powers of attention in order to follow the argument; but others are so obvious that he who runs may read. Nor should it ever be forgotten, that to the sound mind Christ is His own witness, and Christianity carries its own commendation. There is also a class of proofs intrinsic to the Bible itself, which to the most of minds are very conclusive when rightly brought out, and which are all the more valuable, because they need no cumbrous apparatus of external evidence. Of these we shall try to give an example in this and the following chapters.

Coming home, a ship's company describes a remarkable scene which it has witnessed in the course of its wanderings. Discredited by some and believed by others, the

deponents adhere to their statement with wonderful tenacity; nor can imprisonment and torture induce them to alter a single iota. After they are dead, and when all evidence is converging towards the truth of their story, many regret that they can no longer see and cross-question the original narrators. However, it turns out that in a public collection are sundry pictures containing an elaborate representation of the controverted incident, and believed to be the work of some of the spectators, or exact facsimiles from their originals. In settling the dispute, it is obvious that great interest will attach to these drawings, and it will be a matter of the utmost moment to ascertain their trustworthiness. Are they not modern forgeries? Do they contain no fatal incongruities? no anachronism in costume? no solecism in the landscape, or the objects which people it; and are they not flagrant copies the one from the other?—all four the same cunning fable in so many different disguises?

No, says the artist: they are not modern. They are as old as the time they profess. Their transmission is straightforward and abundantly established; and, even though there were no other proof, I know their antiquity from their style, and from the pigments and vehicles employed in their production.

No, say the physical geographer and the antiquary: they are true to the given time and place. That is the exact aspect of the country, and those are its characteristic birds and flowers. And this is the dress of the period; and some of the personages introduced I can recognise as contemporaries, and very correctly represented they are.

No, says the critic: they do not copy one another. Some of them may have used pre-existing sketches, or they may have had access to certain materials in common. But they are all distinct and independent; and some of them, at least, have drawn from the life. They give traits and details which would never occur to any but an actual observer.

So says the scholar: The Gospels are as old as the commencement of the Christian era. For the professed antiquity of no books is the documentary evidence so abundant: but even though all manuscripts and versions were destroyed, their very speech bewrayeth them. Their language is the Greek of Galileans. After the first centuries, that Hellenistic dialect ceased to be spoken by any people; and, after it became a dead language, to write in it such books as we now possess, would have required a scholarship almost supernatural. We can have no more pictures the same as these; for the very pigment which makes them so peculiar has perished.

We agree with you, say the naturalist and the archæologist: they are true to the region they represent. The Gospels are still written on the face of Palestine. To return to your comparison,—they remind me of a picture where, in representing some remarkable coloured strata, that there might be no dispute as to the truth of the tinting, the artist had actually painted with specimens of the several rocks finely pounded. In these Hebrew sketches I recognise the very dust and stones of Zion; and I have no manner of doubt that they are the work of Jews anterior to the destruction of Jerusalem.

And asked to pronounce on these old pictures, how does the critic proceed?

Setting them side by side, he is first of all struck by the different style of all the four. Each artist has his own affinities,—an eye for something which another overlooks, —his own touch and impasto and finish. This first, with his careful draughtsmanship and scientific exactitude, is a manifest systematist, and gives every object as a philosopher would see it. That other, more eclectic, is withal more picturesque; and his pencil everywhere scatters the expressive minutiæ and the happy hits of the descriptive poet. In the masterly perspective, the wavy flow, and the skilful grouping of the third, you recognise the practised strokes and pleasing effects of the accomplished limner. Whilst in the flaming fragments of the fourth,— in the empyrean background, and in the warm air and summer joy of the nearer distances, as also in the divine animation with which the canvas heaves and palpitates, you perceive a soul which had life abundantly, and which labours to convey a glimpse of its own glorious vision, only grudging the imperfection of all material vehicles. Each is distinct and independent. Each could repeat himself in manifold variety; but not one of all the four could pass for his neighbour.

Laying the four Gospels alongside of one another, you observe the Hebrew instincts of St. Matthew. With heraldic accuracy the commencement of his narrative is a long genealogy, supremely interesting to a nation compared with whose youngest family our British Percys and Howards are men of yesterday. Then with a sort of

black-letter fondness for precedent, or rather with a believing Israelite's reverence for prophetic Scripture, ever and anon he is repeating, "As it is written,"—"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet." And in the large collection of parables, so pleasing to Eastern readers; in the recital of those miracles which especially attested the Messiahship of Jesus; and in the prominence given to incidents and discourses which throw light on the "Root and Offspring of David," you discern the Hebrew of the Hebrews,—the Jewish historian, so systematic, so scriptural, so conscious of his country.

Almost as Western as Matthew is Eastern, Mark gives the Syriac *Abbas,* and *Ephphathas,* and *Talitha-cumis,* along with their translation; and "centurions," "speculators," "quadrantes," or farthings, are set down or explained just as they would have been by a Greek or Roman Jew returning to Palestine. But still more characteristic are his selection of striking incidents and the vivid precision of his picturesque language. The shortest of all the evangelists, he is nevertheless the most graphic; and his work may be compared to the cabinet picture of a true master of the old Netherlands school,—sharp in its outline, full without crowding, and clear in its lucid compactness. And like such a master, too, a touch will often add another feature; an expressive dot will light up a wide surface with new significance. It was "green grass" on which the multitude was made to sit down; it was at a "place where two ways met" that the colt would be found which the disciples were to bring to their Master; not only did a young ruler come to ask a question at

Jesus, but he came "running and kneeling down;" not only was our Lord forty days in the wilderness, but He was "there with the wild beasts;" not only did He slumber in the tempest-tossed vessel, but He lay "in the hinder part of the ship, asleep upon a pillow;" not only did He suffer the little children to come to Him, but He was "much displeased" with those who forbade them, "and He took them up in His arms, put His hand upon them, and blessed them."[1]

Then, with his elegant exordium, comes a fluent and skilful biographer, whose orderly sequence aids the memory, as much as his graceful periods charm the ear. Not professing to be autoptical, but claiming a "perfect understanding of all the incidents from the very first," from the materials which "eye-witnesses" supplied he has compiled a narrative continuous and lively, and worthy of an accomplished historian—though ever and anon professional allusions and the recurrence of medical terms remind us of "Luke, the beloved physician."

Need we—can we characterize the picture with which the series ends? Omitting every parable, and recording those miracles only in which the heart as well as the power of his Master was exhibited; detailing at length His conversations and His confidential addresses to His followers, as well as the various traits of majesty or tenderness which had most deeply impressed the narrator's own mind, from its transcendent commencement to its touching close, it is a mighty effort to perpetuate the grace and truth which came in Jesus Christ: whilst over

[1] *The Literary History of the New Testament*, p. 41.

the whole there hovers an atmosphere of "joyful solemnity"[1] and seraphic benevolence, itself sufficient to show that the author was once in contact with the heavenly Original.

Such is the first inference which we draw from this comparison of the four Gospels. They are not four productions of one biographer, but each is the work of a distinct individual. In other words, there are four evangelists as well as four Gospels. To say nothing of external evidence, but judging entirely from their intrinsic style and manner, especially when read in the original, these four memoirs are the work of *four separate biographers.*

Looking at them again, we are struck with their *circumstantial minuteness.* One canvas may be more crowded than another; but each of them contains, perhaps, a hundred heads, and many of them with very decided and definite features. Not only is the great central object carefully depicted in all, but there is no tendency to slur over, in safe and shadowy vagueness, the subordinate and accessory figures. Each is given fresh and firm, and with the precision of those who had the original before them. Looking at these historic sketches, you instantly observe the copiousness of truth and the exactitude of personal information. Romancers lay the scene in a distant region or a departed time; the evangelists recount events happening in their own country and in their living day. And deceivers confine the story to their own immediate coterie, and take care to introduce no names which might be apt to resent the fraud and publish the imposition. But,

[1] Da Costa.

strong in conscious truthfulness, the evangelists abound in dates, and in names of well-known persons and places. Jerusalem, and Jericho, and Nazareth, are introduced as freely as Capernaum or Bethsaida; men in public station, like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, and hostile personages, like Annas and Caiaphas, Pontius Pilate, the Herods and Herodias, are brought in with no more hesitation than Peter, and James, and John. Miracles do not happen to nameless people in unknown regions; but it is on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem, and on the eve of a memorable Passover, that Bartimeus, the blind beggar, the son of Timeus, is restored to sight; and it is at Bethany, a village two miles from the capital, that a few days afterwards Lazarus is recalled from the tomb. Everything is distinct and express; and having nothing to fear from contradiction, by multiplying incidents, and by introducing well-known persons and places, they put it in the power of every contemporary to ascertain the truth of their testimony.

Surveying our pictures once more, we are finally struck with sundry *delicate and undesigned coincidences* between them; and when we say "delicate and undesigned," we purposely exclude those obvious and outstanding features which could scarcely elude the notice of even a copyist; but we refer to those little and recondite ingredients which can only occur in sketches direct from the original. For instance, in numbers One and Two this grey speck might pass for a stone or a sheep, and it is only when we refer to number Three that we find it is meant for a human figure. In a corner of one picture is what seems

to be a single tree; in another, a lozenge of light opens through the trunk; and in a third sketch, the perforated bole resolves into two distinct trees planted near to one another. And as these remote agreements and recondite mutual illustrations successively arise to our earnest gaze, the conviction grows at last irresistible, that whatever they may have known of one another, there was a common original to which the artists were indebted alike for their variations and their concord. When we take up the evangelists, we are struck with that free and independent way in which each gives his version of events, as if secure that his statement will speak for itself, and no less confident in the veracity of his several colleagues. He shows no nervousness as to his reception. He makes no effort to soften down what is strange, or to give extra effect to what is surprising. He offers no explanation to make his narrative tally with some previous history, or to establish its own self-consistency. But, on the other hand, there is occasionally a seeming contradiction; a pretermission of particulars, or a condensation of incidents, or a peculiarity in the spectator's standing-point, which gives the narrative all the air of a meaningless tale, or an entirely different story, till a careful comparison supplies the gap and completes the harmony.

For instance, in his account of the crucifixion, Matthew tells that "the soldiers smote Jesus with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?" And in this challenge there seems nothing very difficult, and we could not have seen the force of the insult nor the meaning of the passage,

had not another evangelist written down, "And *when they had blindfolded him*, they struck him on the face, saying, Prophesy, who is it that smote thee?" (Luke xxii. 64.)[1]

All the evangelists agree in telling, that when the high priest's officers came out to arrest Jesus, Peter drew a sword, and smote off a servant's ear. And yet both Matthew and Mark agree in relating, that when Christ's persecutors sought all sorts of evidence against Him, so as to make out a case before the Roman governor, they could procure none. But is it not very strange, that when the high priest had in his own palace such a striking proof of the violent character and dangerous designs of these Galileans, he should not have called as a witness his own wounded servant? Had we possessed no information beyond the narratives of Matthew and Mark, this would have been a flagrant difficulty. You say that the whole effort of the priests was to prejudice Pilate against Jesus, as a seditious and turbulent character; but they could substantiate nothing. Why was not this recent and conclusive witness forthcoming? Especially when Jesus said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, *then would my servants fight*, that I should not be delivered to the Jews,"—why did none of His accusers reply, "Yes, but your servants did fight, and one of them has inflicted a wound on the sacred person of the high priest's servant?" Now, had we possessed no

[1] See the Rev. J. J. Blunt on *The Veracity of the Gospel, and Acts of the Apostles.* In this work, and its companion volume on the Five Books of Moses, in the *Horæ Paulinæ* of Paley, and the Rev. T. R. Birks's ingenious Supplement, the reader will find these undesigned coincidences accumulated to an amount absolutely overwhelming.

Gospels except these two, we could not have accounted for so strange an oversight on the part of the priestly faction. But Luke mentions a circumstance which sufficiently explains it. From his account we find, that as soon as Peter smote off the ear *Jesus healed it again;* and by doing this He effectually disqualified the wounded servant from appearing as a witness against Him. The priests were in this dilemma. If next morning they produced the servant as a proof of the violence of Christ and His followers, how could Pilate credit them? That wound was never inflicted over-night, or it could not be cured so soon. Or if, to explain this latter circumstance, they acknowledged that Christ had instantaneously healed it, they would at once have trod on dangerous ground, and would have given Pilate another reason for suspecting—what he was already very apt to surmise—the superhuman character of his prisoner.

In Matthew (viii. 16) we read, that "when the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils, and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick." But why was it *evening* when they brought to Jesus those demoniacs and sick persons? From Mark (i. 21, 32) we find that it was the Sabbath-day; and from Luke (xiii. 14) we find that the Jews thought it sinful for "men to come and be healed on the Sabbath-day." But we also know that the Jewish Sabbath ceased at sunset; so that when the evening was come, the people would feel no scruple in bringing their afflicted friends to Jesus to be healed. But observe how far we have to travel before we can complete Mat-

thew's simple statement. He merely mentions that it was evening when Jesus wrought these cures; and had we possessed Matthew's narrative alone, we might have laid no particular stress on the time of day. But we go on to Mark, and we find that it was the Sabbath evening, "when the sun was set." And we go on to Luke, and find, though in a totally different connexion, that these Jews would have thought it very wicked to carry the sick or to accept a cure on the Sabbath. And it is just because the particulars are so minute that the coincidence is so valuable. They are just such trifles which a true historian is apt to omit, and just such trifles that a fabricator would never think of supplying. Or if we could imagine a forger systematically attempting to complete the omissions of his predecessor, he would not deposit his supplemental information in nooks and bypaths, where ages might elapse before it was discovered; but he would exhibit his *addendum* in some conspicuous position, and would take care that it should arrest the reader's attention.

The more delicate these coincidences are, the surer is the inference from them. If you were comparing a cheque with a cheque-book from which it was said to be taken, and found not only the cut portion to correspond with the counterfoil, but that on microscopic examination the torn corner finely coincided,—if you found its rough and ragged edge and each riven fibre to match exactly the surface from which it was said to be sundered, you could no longer doubt that the piece of paper in your hand had been taken from that book. And these delicate agree-

ments of one evangelist with another show that their story is an extract from the Book of Truth,—a leaf from the volume of actual occurrences,—a derivation from a counterpart original. The evangelist John tells us (vi. 5) that on one occasion, when surrounded by a weary multitude, Jesus said, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" And in putting this question He addressed Himself to Philip. But John hints no reason why He should have put this inquiry to Philip rather than to any other apostle. Luke, however (ix. 10), mentions that the place was a desert near to Bethsaida; and John himself happens to have mentioned, in the opening of his Gospel (i. 44), that Bethsaida was the city of Philip. And laying these three insulated passages together, we see how natural it was to put the question, "Where is bread to be bought?" to one acquainted with the neighbourhood. Had we not possessed John's Gospel, we should never have known that such a question was asked; and had we not possessed Luke's Gospel, we should never have seen the special propriety of asking it at Philip.

We have chosen these examples because in them the truth of certain miracles happens to be implicated. If the coincidences now quoted be real and undesigned, then, not only are they an irresistible argument for the truth of the collective narrative, but they establish directly as facts the healing of Malchus's ear, the cure of many sick and demoniacs, and the miraculous feeding of the multitude with five loaves and two fishes,—for it is in the recital of these miracles that those coincidences, so truth-vouching, occur. And if, again, these miracles be true, then is Jesus all that

He professed,—for it was in support of His claims as Messiah that He wrought these miracles.

But from the Gospels we may transfer this test to other portions of the New Testament. We have there a book mainly occupied with the travels of St. Paul; and alongside of it we have thirteen Epistles ascribed to the same apostle. Now, even supposing that the author of the Epistles and the author of the Acts were the same individual, it has been triumphantly shown, by a sort of microscopical survey, that nothing but scrupulous truth or omniscient falsehood could account for the complex and involute agreement which subsists between them. To detect these latent harmonies was, perhaps, the greatest service to historic Christianity which acumen and sound sense united have ever rendered; and though it is impossible to offer any abstract here, we may safely congratulate, as proof against circumstantial evidence, the sceptic who reads the *Horæ Paulinæ*, and still doubts whether such a man as Paul existed, whether his Epistles be genuine, and whether the Acts of the Apostles be true.

We have often visited the ruins of a famous castle, with which, no doubt, many of our readers are well acquainted. Long ago it was captured, and that it might never be a stronghold to the patriots of Germany again, the enemy burnt it and blew up the walls. But in the weedy fosse is still shown a huge fragment of a tower, which, when exploded, alighted there; and in the goodly joining of its stones and the hardening of its ancient mortar such a rocky mass had it become, that when lifted from its base, instead of descending in a shower of rubbish,

it came down superbly a tower still. And, like that massy keep, the books we have been considering are so knit together in their exquisite accuracy, the histories are so riveted to one another, and the epistles so mortised into the histories,—and the very substance of epistles and histories alike is so penetrated by that cement of all-pervasive reality, that the whole now forms an indissoluble concrete. And though all coeval literature had perished, —though all the external confirmations were destroyed,— though all the monuments of antiquity were annihilated; strong in its intrinsic truthfulness, the New Testament would still hold its lofty place—a tower of self-sustaining integrity. And though the efforts of enmity were to succeed as they have signally failed,—though learned hostility were to undermine its documentary foundations, and blow up that evidence of manuscripts and early versions on which it securely reposes, so finely do its facts fit into one another, so strongly are its several portions clamped together, and in the penetration and interfusion through all its parts of its ultimate inspiring Authorship, into such a homogeneous structure has it consolidated, that it would come down again on its own basis, shifted, but nowise shattered. Such a book has God made the Bible, that, whatever theories wax popular, or whatever systems explode, "the Scripture cannot be broken."

CHAPTER V.

LESSONS IN THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE : II. THE MOULD AND THE MEDALLION.

For understanding some subjects, and for appreciating some kinds of evidence, a special education is requisite. In order to understand the true theory of the planetary system, the mind must be prepared by a knowledge of mathematics. The Newtonian system would still be the true theory of the universe, even although no mortal could appreciate the proofs on which it rests : but where there exists a competent knowledge of geometry, and where the celestial phenomena are adequately observed, the doctrine of gravitation forces itself on every sane and unprejudiced understanding. In other words, it sometimes needs one truth to pave the way for another.

When the Most High was about to introduce into the world the most important of all revelations, He prepared a receptacle on purpose for it. He selected a "peculiar people," and by a lengthened process of instruction He fitted them for understanding His final message, and for giving the first welcome to the world's Redeemer.

Had the Advent taken place in Italy or Greece, or in ancient Britain, we can scarcely see how the Saviour could

have made His meaning understood, or how He could have demonstrated His celestial mission. Believing in a thousand deities,—believing, too, that heroes and patriots had often been promoted to a place among the gods, had Jesus appeared in such a nation working His miracles of mercy, it would have been supposed that He was just another Hercules or Esculapius, or a god come down in the likeness of men, and who would again go back to his native Olympus. With a most imperfect ethics,—perceiving little harm in fraud and covetousness, in lust and falsehood, and practising without remorse the most atrocious of crimes,—they had scarcely first principles sufficient to appreciate the heavenly morality of the Mount of Beatitudes, and had nothing of that "conscience of sin" which longs for a Saviour. And possessed of no prophecies,—taught by no Moses or Isaiah,—they neither looked out for a Messiah, nor did they know the tokens by which to distinguish Him when once He appeared.

But for this greatest event of human history God prepared a people and a place; He prepared the Hebrew people and the Holy Land.

First of all, He segregated the Hebrew race from all the nations of the world. Enclosing them within a *cordon* of rites and ceremonies more exclusive than any brazen wall, He planted them in Palestine, and through the long Pagan ages He kept them dwelling quite alone. By a process as strange as it was wise and effective, He familiarized them with certain great ideas, and taught them those fundamental truths which it was essential that at least one nation should know.

He taught them that God is one; that He is a spirit, infinite and omnipresent, the Creator of all things. And in teaching them the unity and spirituality of the Divine nature, He placed them on a platform immeasurably exalted above the whole of Heathendom. In the absolute and undoubting certainty that there is only one God, and that God is a spirit, infinite and eternal,—the starting-point of a Hebrew child was in advance of the theological goal of a Plato and a Seneca; and in the mere absence of graven images, alongside of the intensest devotion, Palestine presented an aspect all the more impressive that it was entirely unique and unparalleled.

He taught them many of the Divine perfections. The gods of the nations were at the best immortal men,—heroic personages, with a mixture of human infirmities and superhuman powers. Most of them were deified monsters or canonized villains,—patrons of murder and theft, and every pollution; and it is no wonder that the worshippers of Kali and Bacchus grew nearly as vile as the almighty brutes whom they adored. But Israel knew that Jehovah is holy. They knew that the great Creator loves truth and purity, and that all His perfections are arrayed against the thief and the liar, the unchaste and untrue. They knew that God is righteous and faithful to His promises; that He is slow to anger and abundant in mercy. And though it were only a single psalm, like the 103d or the 139th, more true theology, more genuine devotion, more of child-like faith in the Supreme, would be chanted any morning in the Temple in one such Hebrew hymn than could be compiled from the sacred

songs of all the neighbouring bards from Hesiod and Homer down to Pindar and Callimachus.[1]

He gave them good precepts, and in the ten commands the Hebrews had a code the most simple, precise, and comprehensive which a people could desire, and issued with all the majestic sanctions of a legislation direct from Heaven.

He taught them the enormity of sin. Not that other nations had no sense of sin; but their apprehension of its demerit and its turpitude was faint, even when they felt its danger. But to the Israelite the law of the leper, the scapegoat, the morning and evening sacrifice, the Day of Atonement, and the perpetual ablutions and offerings, were so many mirrors; and in the focus where all the light concentrated was that dark and dreadful evil, *sin*. And of all men then existing, it was only from the heart of a Hebrew that such bitter cries could be wrung, "Have

[1] The processes of this education have been illustrated in a work of remarkable freshness and power, which we recommend to all who have not yet read it, *The Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation. By an American Citizen.* Nor can the historical books of the Old Testament be perused with thorough appreciation till the reader has his eyes open to this master-fact. It is only when he remembers the important end for which the Most High was teaching and training the "peculiar people," that he can see the rationale of the Levitical code, with all its specifications of creatures clean and unclean; and it is only then that he can understand why judgments so severe and terrible followed acts of transgression. It was needful to wean the people from idolatry; and the plague which followed the erection of the golden calf was a sharp and signal lesson. It was all-important to give an impressive view of the Divine sanctity,—the immeasurable interval betwixt the sinful creature and the Holy One of Israel; and this impression was instantly produced by the fate of Korah and his confederates, and afterwards of Uzzah. It was essential that all should feel how the eyes of the Lord are everywhere, beholding the evil and the good; and how could Jehovah's omniscience be more effectually taught to a rude and half-reclaimed nation than by the detection and punishment of Achan?

mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."

Yet He taught them that sin may be taken away. Such was the avowed significance of each expiatory offering; and the two ideas,—sin, and a satisfaction for sin,—were involved in every sacrifice. We can easily imagine the emotions of a Nathanael, or other thoughtful Israelite, on his yearly visit to Jerusalem. From the battlements of the "Beautiful House," the silver trumpets have sounded their peaceful signal, and the mighty portals are flung open for the day. Already the courts are peopled with kneeling groups and solitary Simeons at their morning prayer; and from the fagots on the burnished altar the flame leaps soft and pale to the sunshine;—when, in his gorgeous robes, and with the Twelve Tribes flashing on his jewelled breastplate, the high priest solemnly advances, and a Levite leads forward a spotless lamb. It was touching to see it there, and to know its doom; last week sporting amidst its fellows on the green pastures of Bethlehem, and now the only one of its species amidst this strange multitude, for whose fault it is about to suffer,—its unused footsteps slipping on the marble floor, but silent and unresisting. Over its head, on which he lays his hands, the high priest confesses Israel's sins; and then, taking from an attendant the sacrificial knife, next moment the poor firstling bleeds and dies. And as from the altar where it burns great clouds ascend, fragrant with wine and incense, the voice of praise and prayer rises loud and urgent; and, the

service ended, Aaron's successor turns to the prostrate worshippers, and uplifting his outspread hands, he says, "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace,"—and amidst the loud Amens the congregation separates, and the courts are clear. And so we might follow the wistful worshipper through the ceremonial of a Passover, or of a personal sin-offering: and in every sacrifice he would see a remembrance of sin. For just as the morning sacrifice reminded him that sure as the favoured land woke up, so depravity went forth to repeat its daily doings: just as the evening sacrifice told him that six hours had not elapsed till, from the fermenting surface of a nation's life, a miasma had again arisen, which needed prayers and sacrifice to disperse its wrath-attracting exhalations; so the Passover proclaimed that, in the holiest home of all that Holy Land, there still was guilt sufficient to draw down Jehovah's ire, and that nothing could hold back the destroyer's sword save the sprinkled sign,—at once a confession and a covert,—an acknowledgment of guilt, and an avowal of confidence in Jehovah's covenant: whilst, in like manner, the personal offering spoke the sad admission, "Against thee, thee only, have *I* sinned." But along with the suggested sinfulness, simultaneous and commingling, rose the idea of substitution: still the victim, and that victim most frequently the lamb,—beautiful and free from blemish; the lamb so patient and meek, so innocent and endearing, such a favourite everywhere, the gentle creature which

you would like to carry in your bosom. But once more, the hand laid upon its head, and the guilt confessed,—once more, the glittering steel, the flowing blood, the dying struggle,—once more, the victim and the sacrifice. So that the same sacrifice which spoke of guilt published God's mercy. Along with the Divine displeasure, it gave a welcome hint of righteous reconciliation. It suggested a penalty, but a penalty which could be somehow transferred. And if to the transgressor it cried, "Behold your sin!" to the believing suppliant it audibly whispered, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes it away!"

Finally, in preparing a nation as the special shrine of the Advent, God sent to it many prophets. In predictions exceedingly numerous—and many of them remarkably precise—He gave the Jews tokens by which they might recognise the Saviour when He came. His Divine Father, His mortal mother, His tribe, His family, His birthplace, the period of His appearing, His precursor, His miracles, His popularity, His betrayal, His cruel death in its minutest details, His reappearance in life, His ascension to heaven, and the wonders that should instantly follow,—all were so vividly described that for ages beforehand the Hebrews were furnished with ever so many "marks of Messiah."

Thus peculiar were Palestine and its people; and such were the great truths to which, through a term of fifteen centuries, the Most High had been gradually conducting them; till at last the Holy Land had become the only oasis in a blighted world, the only Goshen amidst the heathen gloom. Of sound theology and of substantial

morality, the Jews, however otherwise uninteresting, possessed a monopoly; and of all nations they alone had the means of acquiring those views of sin which awaken the desire of a Saviour. Theirs was the only land without an idol, and theirs the only one which boasted a revealed religion. The moral law was theirs, and theirs were all the prophets. And yet, with all their advantages, the Jews themselves were not a noble people. Generally speaking, they had no elevation of mind, no expansiveness, no spirituality. In the reign of the Cæsars they had become a morose and selfish community—a set of noisy wranglers and repulsive fanatics. Could we suppose a philosopher like Seneca travelling in Syria about the year 25, we might imagine him writing,—"What a paradoxical people! Judging by the Greek version, there exists nothing comparable to their sacred books. Rules of virtue so strict, patterns of excellence so majestic, representations of the Deity so sublime, do not exist in any other literature. And they have many strange usages: a Sabbath every seventh day on which they do no work; sacrifices which they offer with very singular but affecting observances; many lustrations and intricate ceremonies. But the two most extraordinary features of this anomalous people remain to be noticed. There is not in all their land a single statue or image; and yet they are not atheists. On the contrary, no people can be more religious; but they fancy that any similitude, however costly or fair, would be an outrage on the infinite and invisible Deity. Their other peculiarity is this:—their sacred books teem with predictions of a great Deliverer, who,

they think, will acquire for their country universal empire. He is suddenly to make his appearance in their temple at Jerusalem; and you cannot conceive with what intensity the expectation makes them cling to this temple; which, indeed, is in itself a fane of surpassing costliness and glory. At this very moment they are on the tiptoe of expectation; for they affirm that the time has arrived for this conqueror coming. We shall see. I confess that I am perplexed. I admire the theology and ethics of these Jews; and sometimes, in their gorgeous temple, with its veiled but vacant sanctuary, amidst their ancient worship, I feel as if I could adore the Jehovah of Israel. But when I look to the Jews themselves, and say,—Is this the product of that lofty creed and spiritual worship? these sour bigots and solemn triflers, these jabbering rabbis and snivelling pedants—are these the normal community,—the model people,—the optimist nation? And when I see that such is revealed religion's masterpiece, I fall back upon philosophy, and am again the doubter."

Not so, Sir Sage. Not the normal people, but the pupil nation. Israel is God's scholar, but he is not meant to be the world's pattern. By a series of admirable lessons God has been educating this nation with a view to the Saviour's arrival; and in His wonderful wisdom He has contrived it that were Messiah coming now, the mass of the people would instantly be moved, and yet He would obtain an enlightened welcome from only a small and wistful minority. The moment that His harbinger announces, "The kingdom is nigh!" you shall see the whole country stirred from end to end; but when He adds, "Behold the Lamb

of God!" few will follow. And yet these few, in following Messias, will move the world. But were it in your Rome that the cry was raised, "The kingdom of God!" who would understand? and were any one proclaiming, "Behold the Lamb!" would not the magistrate confine him as a maniac?

No; not the model people, but the mould for a nobler dispensation. It is only amongst a people who believe the Divine unity and holiness that an Incarnation can answer its purpose. It is only amongst a people habituated to the ideas of substitution and expiation that a gospel, based on sacrifice and satisfaction for sin, can find its first footing. It is only amongst a people possessed of the prophetic marks of Messiah, that He can be expected before He arrives, and identified when at last He appears. Like one who looks at the dark mould into which the artist is about to pour the liquid alabaster, and he thinks, "How black! It will surely soil the fine material! And pray, what is the use of these sharp cuttings and deep indentations?" But the projection takes place, and as soon as the mass is set, there comes forth a copy from some great Master,—a Nativity, a Transfiguration, a Last Supper. You look at that Hebrew Institute, and you say, "Had it been the work of a Divine Artist, it had surely been fairer." But you forget that it is only the matrix of a forthcoming model: the pattern[1] of eventual Perfection. Every depression and indentation has its meaning. These strict precepts and stern prohibitions will only give brighter relief to the counterpart gospel; and the nicer and more

[1] Hebrews ix. 23.

numerous the lines, the more exquisite will the product appear. "Meats, and drinks, and new moons, and holy days, and sabbath days, are all shadows of things to come: but the body is of Christ." If you desire to know the meaning of this Hebrew Institute, you must look to Messiah. This land of greatest light has been prepared as His cradle. These prophecies are His credentials. That temple is the march-stone of the two dispensations, the limit which fixes His arrival, and on the hither side of which His coming must take place. That Old Testament is His text-book, and the pedestal of the national religiousness His pulpit. The very prejudices of the majority will be the means of accomplishing His great oblation, and the existing rites and sacrifices are the hieroglyphics which His one offering will finally expound. And when once that Advent is accomplished, the old Institute will be abolished. When once the medallion comes forth, the mould will be broken. No counterfeit can ever appear; for, exploding the temple, annihilating the royal family of Judah, and expelling every Hebrew from the Holy Land, God in His providence will make it impossible for any one after His own Messiah to be born at Bethlehem, or to claim descent from David, or to come suddenly to the temple at Jerusalem. And having fulfilled their first function as the pupil nation and the pioneers of the Advent, but rejecting the mercy which they transmit to others, the Jews will survive as God's witnesses. Sullen and self-blinded, the old scholar will wander everywhere a reluctant evidence that Jesus is the Christ, and that the gospel is Divine.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MUSTARD SEED; OR, THE GROWTH OF THE GOSPEL.

THE plant which yields mustard is pretty well known; at least, every one knows the bright yellow flower which too often in the months of May and June makes the corn-fields golden. The hard black seed of that charlock, when crushed, is hot and pungent, and is extensively sold as mustard; and the true mustards are species of the self-same genus. In England they grow to a height of four or five feet, and in the warmer climate and rich soil of Palestine they become much taller and more luxuriant. Speaking of the progress which His gospel was destined to make, the Lord Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field (or 'garden'), which is indeed the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

Few interpreters, however, are content with such an "herb" or vegetable. They want a literal "tree," with a wooden trunk, and large enough for birds to build nests in the branches. So they suggest the *Cissus arborea* and *Salvadora Persica*—trees which no man was likely to sow

in his "garden," and which the original word would never suggest to a Greek or Hebrew hearer. Others, aware that *Sinapi* is the well-known herbaceous mustard-plant of husbandry, are naturally anxious to magnify it as much as possible. Thus Rabbi Simeon Ben Chalaphta is frequently quoted, who says: "There was in my field a stalk of mustard, into which I was wont to climb, as men are wont to climb into a fig-tree." The Rabbi does not tell us his size, but either he himself must have been very small, or his powers of imagination very great.

If we look at Matt. xiii. 31, Mark iv. 31, and Luke xiii. 19, in the light of those locutions and usages which govern every language, we shall find no difficulty. This seed is sown, and when it is sprung up it becometh "greater than all herbs"—taller than the pulse and dill and other pot-herbs around it—in fact, "a tree;" so arborescent that the finches and other little birds which are so fond of its seeds alight in its branches. Not a word is said about their building their nests, as some have imagined: they simply perch or "lodge" (*κατασκηνοῦν*, "tabernacle"); and there is no need to picture up among the boughs an eagle, or ospray, or any such *rara avis* as Rabbi Simeon. The mustard is a little seed; but sown in a favourable soil it shoots up, and by and by can scarcely be called an herb: it is quite a tree, so that the birds which come to devour its seeds are hidden in the branches.

Such is the meaning of the words. Then for the purport of the parable. Some of the Fathers take occasion from it to descant on the medicinal virtues of the sub-

stance itself. Augustine says that mustard has the power of expelling poison, and just as the mustard-plant overtopped the other herbs, so the true doctrine will outgrow and cast into the shade sectarian dogmas. Hilary remarks, that just as the sharp flavour of the mustard seed is brought out by tribulation—by crushing and grinding—so the efficacy of the gospel is brought out by persecution and affliction. The other "herbs" are the prophets, whose preaching was given to the weak and sickly Israelites; but the branches of the mustard-tree are the apostles, to whom—like little birds tossed in the tempest—the nations resort, and wearied with the storms raised by the prince of the power of the air, seek refuge in the branches.

All this may be ingenious, but it is quite irrelevant. The design of the parable is obvious. The underlying thought is simple and single. A little germ and a large result—a small commencement and a conspicuous growth —an obscure and tiny granule, followed by a vigorous vegetation—the "least of all seeds" and "the greatest of herbs"—such is the avowed contrast of the parable; and the resemblance of this to the gospel, or the Christian dispensation, is the declared lesson of the Lord.

Is it not so when we glance at the history of real religion in the *world,* in *communities,* in the *individual soul?*

I. For instance: What a little and unlikely thing was the cradle of Bethlehem! Most cradles come to nothing; most infancies result in very ordinary specimens of upgrown humanity; and to the outside spectator there was no particular promise in the cradle watched by that Hebrew mother. It was not a cot of ebony or ivory,

curtained with tapestry and covered with some wonder of the loom, and beneath such silken canopy as guards and glorifies the slumbers of imperial infancy. It was placed in a stable, and was in fact the manger where a little while before the ox had munched his provender—cobwebs the canopy, a carpenter's cloak the covering. Nothing could look liker the outset of an abject existence, the germ from which you would expect a very poor and vulgar history to spring. Thirty years after you could only expect to find the occupant of that manger grown up into a rough, hard-handed, toil-worn man, tramping out and in among the boors of Bethlehem, tending these cattle like the foster-brother who had grown up among them, and exerting rude energy in feats of rustic sport or prowess.

Thirty years passed on, and the tender plant had grown up, the root out of a dry ground began to bud forth and blossom. Jesus was manifested to Israel—the Son of Mary had become the marvel of Palestine. In words such as earth had never heard, because man had never spoken, He was revealing the Father: He was bringing God into the abodes of men—into the hovel of the fisherman and the haunts of the trader; and with prodigies of power, such as seemed a natural accompaniment of supernatural sanctity, He was healing the sick, was raising the dead, was stilling the tempest, was feeding the hungry, and was on every side awakening the question, When Messias cometh, will He do greater miracles than this man doeth? Even so. Blade by blade and branch by branch the seedling of Heaven had expanded, till a shekinah was visible in its Burning Bush; and the

child born in the stable, the infant cradled in Bethlehem's manger, answered to the name, Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Dark, hard, unlovely, there is no resemblance between that seed and the luxuriant plant, so broad in its branches, in its blossoms so golden. Such a mustard-seed was the Cross of Calvary. To those who had begun to look for redemption in Israel, that Cross was a crushing disappointment: to priests and Pharisees it was a source of savage exultation: to the rabble of Jerusalem it was an exciting spectacle, and the tragic finish of a strange career; and whilst like a sword it pierced through Mary's soul, it was the tombstone under which disciples saw buried their hope and joy. The grain of seed fell into the ground and died. How different the scene two months thereafter! Jesus by this time is risen: He has gone back to His glory: the Holy Ghost is given, and in the new light which from prophets and psalmists has broken forth, the gloom has cleared off Golgotha: Gethsemane's crushed and blood-stained sod comes out the battle-field where the Captain of man's salvation has conquered; and the Cross of Calvary, instead of the extinction of man's best hope, because the destruction of man's best Friend, stands forth the altar of the one accepted Sacrifice—the door of hope in our dark valley, the ladder with its foot on our sinful world, and heaven reconciled at its summit. Not two months, when this seed has begun to shoot forth gloriously. Not two months, when that Cross is lifted up, and looking to Him whom they have pierced, Jerusalem's inhabitants begin

to weep. Again it is lifted up, and thousands more are melted. It travels out of Palestine, speeds across the seas, penetrates strange lands, and still God's Spirit goes with it. The savage, coarse and hispid, learns from it God's mercy, and rises from his knees a new, a mild, and gentle creature. The scorning sage, as he struts along, and with curled and contemptuous lip disdains mankind, espies its love divine, and conscious of a mysterious magic, a benignant balm which has got somewhere in about his heart, the great deep opens, a fountain begins to flow in his once arid but now dissolving nature, and he goes forth amidst his fellows, a sunshine in his face, and a hand open as day to melting charity. With red arms the robber clasps it, and in its mighty expiation the crimson turns to snow. With remorse already stinging, the blasphemer presses to his burning bosom the healing tree, and the undying worm is no longer there. In life's last hour, the awakened reprobate sees in Christ crucified the full range of God's mercy, and from the jaws of perdition is transported to Paradise. And thus, with the powers of darkness in its front, and an altered world behind it, the Cross of Christ moved on; and though some Jews stumbled, and some Greeks were foolish, it soon proved itself to the various races of mankind God's saving power—till of all seeds the least and most unlikely had overtopped all other herbs—had outgrown the philosophies and supplanted the religions of the East and West, and sent out its branches to the world's end.

II. So with communities: so with the history of religion in given regions or localities. In the year 1789, the

crew of the ship Bounty turned their captain and officers adrift and carried the ship away. After many adventures, the nine surviving mutineers landed in the little island of Pitcairn, with the heathen wives they had brought from Tahiti, and some Tahitian men. Their first years passed in quarrels and feuds, in drunken brawls and deliberate murders, till, in 1800, John Adams found himself the only man in all the island. His conscience was awakened by frightful dreams; but though the island was cut off from all the world, happily he had a Bible and a Prayer-Book, which still remained from the stores of the old Bounty. By reading that Bible, he found how a sinner may obtain forgiveness; and as the patriarch of the island, he set to work to instruct the children and the Tahitian women; and such was his success, that when, in 1814, Captain Beechey visited Pitcairn, he found it peopled by a race virtuous, religious, cheerful, and hospitable beyond all precedent—patterns of conjugal and filial affection, devoting the Sabbath entirely to reading and serious meditation and prayer, permitting no work to be done that day, and with a standard of truth so strict, that even irony was frowned on as a sort of falsehood; and all this truth, probity, and mutual affection had sprung from the single mustard-seed, the one copy of the Scriptures, to which the awakened conscience of John Adams went for consolation.

Nearer home, but far out in the Western main, is a little island, round which for nearly half the year the Atlantic clangs his angry billows, keeping the handful of inhabitants close prisoners. Most of it is bleak and

barren, but there is one little bay rimmed round with silvery sand and reflecting in its waters a slope of verdure. Towards this bay, one autumn evening, 1300 years ago, a rude vessel steered its course. It was a flimsy bark, no better than a huge basket of osiers covered over with the skins of beasts; but the tide was tranquil, and as the boatmen plied their oars, they raised the voice of psalms. Skimming across the bay, they beached their coracle and stepped on shore, one, two, three, as many as twelve or thirteen, and on the green slope built a few hasty huts and a tiny Christian temple. The freight of that little ship was the gospel, and the errand of the saintly strangers was to tell benighted heathen about Jesus and His love. From the favoured soil of Ireland they had brought a grain of mustard-seed, and now they sowed it in Iona. In the conservatory of their little church it throve, till it was fit to be planted out on the neighbouring mainland. To the Picts with their tattooed faces, to the Druids peeping and muttering in their dismal groves, the missionaries preached the gospel. That gospel triumphed. The groves were felled, and where once they stood arose the house of prayer. Planted out on the bleak moorlands, the little seed became a mighty tree, so that the hills of Caledonia were covered with the shade; nor must Scotland ever forget the seedling of Iona, and the labours of Columba with his meek Culdees. And if God give the increase, who can tell to what mighty trees those little seedlings may grow, from that hardy nursery transplanted to Canada and Australia, to Calcutta and Amoy, to Caffraria and Old Calabar?

III. So with the rise and progress of religion in the individual soul. "The just shall live by faith"—a text so small, long latent in Luther's memory, and long dormant, when quickened by God's Spirit, became not only gladsome liberty to himself, but the germ of a glorious Reformation. And so, "a word, a thought, a passing sentence, may prove to be the little seed which eventually fills and shadows the whole heart and being, and calls all thoughts, all passions, all delights to come and shelter under it."[1]

A great encouragement to those who are teaching others. Whether it be your Sabbath scholars or your own children, it is not so important that they should commit to memory great quantities of Scripture, long chapters or long psalms, as that they should have indelibly engraven on their hearts a few of the most precious portions, psalms like the 23d and 103d, hymns like "Rock of Ages" and "I lay my sins on Jesus," texts like those faithful sayings which proclaim the love of God, the cleansing blood of Christ, the power of believing prayer. A tract in the pocket, a Testament in the trunk, is a good thing, and may lead to the happiest results; but as the youth goes away and leaves you, a text in the memory is better—some great saving truth, terse and simple as it occurs in the lively oracles, or as it has been inwoven in immortal verse or more immortal music, or as it has been embalmed and made for ever sacred by some tender association—some touching incident or earnest exhortation. When the set time comes—in the distant colony, in the tropic ship, in the house of bondage, serving the citizen of a far

[1] Alford.

country, and envying the husks which the swine do eat—that faded but familiar truth may return upon his memory, and, as he ponders, long closed founts of feeling may reopen, till the resolve is made, "I will arise and go to my Father."

And a great encouragement to those who are trying to find favour for any useful plan or good idea. As long as it remains in your own mind, it is the seed in the mustard pod; but cast into the field, or the garden, it will grow. Thus David Nasmith's notion of a house-to-house visitation of the London poor has grown into those town and city missions which are the salt, the saving element, in our over-crowded centres. Thus the first Bible-woman has been repeated, till they are counted by hundreds. Thus John Pounds's little scapegrace, bribed by a hot potato to come for his daily lesson, has multiplied into our ragged schools, with their thousands of teachers, and myriads of scholars. Thus the system of total abstinence in the hands of Father Matthew reduced the whisky-drinking of Ireland from twelve millions of gallons in one year, to not more than five millions. And thus any true and living thing will grow, if it gets but a good and honest soil, and is so happy as to receive its fair proportion of sun and shower.

Which suggests our concluding thought—the treatment we ourselves should give the truths of God. An acorn on the mantle-piece, a dry bulb in a dark cupboard, a mustard seed in your pocket or a pill-box, will not grow. The only crop you can hope for is from the seed which you cast into the ground, and take pains with, till it sends up first

the tender blade, and by and by the branching stalk. So texts or truths in the memory are acorns on the shelf, seeds in the pill-box. It is good to have them, but do not leave them there. Take out any one you like and plant it. Ponder the saying till it grows wonderful—till its meaning comes out, and you feel some amazement at its unsurmised significance. Ponder it, till, like the phosphorescent forms of vegetation, the light of its expanding falls on other passages, and revelation is itself revealed. Ponder it, till the smallest of seeds becomes the greatest of herbs, and a brief maxim of heavenly wisdom develops in your conduct a beauty of holiness. Ponder it, till, like the bulb taken out of the cupboard, it is no longer dead and dry, but with the scent of water at its roots, and looking forth at your lattice from its pedestal of amethyst or beryl, it warms with summer hues the wintry weather, and sends through all the hidden chambers of your heart exotic perfume, suggestions of joys which even now exist elsewhere, though outside and around the trees are stripped, and the world is cold.

CHAPTER VII.

LEAVEN; OR, THE CIVILIZING INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

After comparing the gospel or the Church to a grain of mustard seed, the Saviour added this other parable:—"The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." At the first glance, it might seem as if this were just the same thought repeated; but a little attention will show us that the underlying idea of each parable is distinct, and so the one makes an absolute addition to the lesson of the other.

The mustard-tree is an organized body. It has a trunk and branches, it has leaves, it has fruit. It begins with a germ, and it goes on expanding. It requires sustenance, for it has life, and if it gets sustenance it grows. Like every plant, like every animal, it is an organism; unlike a stone, unlike a heap of sand, unlike that handful of meal, it has life and limbs, vitality and growth.

So the Church of Christ is a living and organized whole, of which a tree, with its roots and branches, its fruit and its shadow, is an excellent emblem. This organism springs from that germ called the gospel. This little seed is sown

in God's garden, and, quickened by the Holy Spirit, it springs up and grows. In Iona, the preaching of Columba springs up the Church of the Culdees. In Germany, the preaching of Luther springs up the Evangelical or Protestant community. In the world itself, the preaching of apostles, the grain of mustard-seed deposited by the fishermen of Galilee, springs up the truest, oldest, widest of all fellowships—the Church of the First-born, whose names are written in heaven—that grandest of all societies, of which dimly or distinctly we think when we say, "I believe in the communion of saints."

But leaven is no organism, and for that matter neither is meal. Leaven is the little mass of sour and fermenting paste which in other days, and before the employment of yeast, the baker used to put into his dough, till it spread through the entire batch, and changed the whole into the likeness of itself. And although in the Bible leaven is frequently used to denote hypocrisy or malice, there is no reason why it should not be used to denote *any principle which spreads and penetrates,* whether good or bad. And here there can be little doubt that it is intended to say, Christianity is a principle designed and fitted to influence the entire community. Although in the outset there may not be much of it, yet it has prodigious potency, and as it keeps on working it will more and more assimilate to its own nature all that is called society. It is not only the Christian who will bring to Christ the pagan or the profligate, but it is Christian truth, Christian feeling, Christian conduct, which will tell on the world's way of thinking and acting, and at last leave nothing in the whole lump of

humanity which is not sensibly affected by this heaven-descended principle.

If so, the purport of the two parables is sufficiently distinct. The one describes the Church of Christ in its own separate identity and organic completeness, starting up from the soil of this world, yet not of it—every leaf and twig partaking the same nature, and in its surprising growth destined to overtop all competitors. The other describes Christianity as a *power* or *principle*—a little yeast or ferment to which God has given such potency, that it will go on permeating and assimilating the entire mass of humanity, till the whole is leavened. The one metaphor completes the other. The tree *grows*, the leaven *works*. The tree is a distinct living organism, the leaven is a power of influence. The Church of Christ is the mustard-tree, the leaven is Christianity. Or, put it another way—If both the grain of seed and the leaven represent the gospel, in the one case we have the seed germinating and springing up in that separate, self-contained unity which we call the church of the saved—in the other, we have the potent and mysterious principle going out beyond itself into society, and materially affecting the world which surrounds the Church.

Put into modern language, we have here the assertion, *Christianity is the great civilizer*. This is a truth to which more justice has been done by historians than by divines; still it is truth. No doubt there have been civilisations which were not Christian—the Greek and Roman, for example, and the Chinese and Indian, if we may give so grand a name to a grotesque and puerile culture. And in

our modern civilisation there may be elements which are not purely or pre-eminently Christian—which are not essentially Christian at all. There is a classical element, for example—and an artistic element, and a very powerful commercial element—which have all their share in rescuing from barbarism, and which have all contributed to such refinement as the present age has reached. The great educator of the world is God himself, and the great text-book from which the lessons are taken, is the volume of His "Lively Oracles;" but there are pictures and object-lessons all round the walls—beasts, trees, volcanoes, geysers, large as life, pictures, statues, instruments of music; and in the palæstra of actual existence the pupils are made to do a great deal in the way of moulding one another. Many of these pupils are very perverse, and many of the influences at work are intrusive and pernicious—not at all divine, but downright devilish; still the world which God has so loved, and for which He gave His Son, must never be abandoned to the wicked one; and under its Divine Guide and Guardian it is interesting to notice the processes by which the gradual emancipation is going forward, and a groaning, but self-sold race, is being raised and restored to the liberty of sons of God.

There are certain facts which will not be disputed: There is a Bible in the world, and there is also a Church; but although all men do not accept the Bible out and out, nor do all belong to the household of faith, yet through that Bible, and through that Church, Christ is the Benefactor of multitudes who nevertheless refuse to have "this Man to reign over them."

Take, for instance, equity, shading off, as it does, into its kindred excellence, humanity. Says the apostle James, "Go to, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that are come upon you. Behold, the hire of the labourers, who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth, and the cries of them who have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." And all throughout our Lord's discourses we find denunciations of those who devour widows' houses, and throughout the Old Testament prophets—those great preachers of righteousness—denunciations of those who grind the faces of the poor. And although there may be still sufficient fraud and rapacity, no one can conceive what Christianity has done for the poor and unprotected, who cannot throw himself back into the times before the advent, or who is not familiar with the condition of the dependent classes under Eastern despotisms. And it would have been the same in Europe, but Christianity stepped in. It said to the landed proprietor and the chieftain, "If you promise to pay, you must perform. If you take that man's time, or labour—if you take his ox or his ass—you must give him fair value in return. True, you are strong, and you call him your serf or vassal; but he has a Lord paramount as well as you, who is stronger than either, and before whose tribunal you both must stand." And thus, even in its most degenerate days, Christianity threw its shield over the poor and needy, and taking up the cause of him who had no helper, its leaven has so penetrated legislation, or rather we should say, has so permeated that *opinion* which is the source of

all effective and enduring legislation, that now not only is there no serfdom in Europe, but the day-labourer is as secure of his wages as the Crown is secure of its revenues.

"Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you." This great gospel maxim has so infiltrated the mind of Europe, that it is current even amongst those who imperfectly practise it, and by its implied recognition of universal brotherhood, it is giving to the laws and to the ways of every land a complexion of fairness, of respect for one another's rights, for one another's feelings even, utterly unknown in lands where one race is clay and another porcelain, or one has descended from Bramah's head or arm, another from his toe.

But if Christianity has thus supplied the place of a conscience to the world, so has it been the social heart, the great source of the world's compassion and sympathy. What is to be done with our orphans? Let them shift for themselves, says Selfishness. What is to be done with our aged and invalid poor, and our imbeciles? Let them die off, and the sooner the better, says Political Economy; they are not in our plan, they spoil our calculations, they are very much in the way, and are best let alone. But if we let them alone, our religion won't let *us* alone. The poor and the outcast were taken up by Christ himself, and—"The poor ye always have with you"—were by Him transferred to the Church, when they should enjoy His bodily presence no longer. And not only has He made the care for their case a necessity of the Christian life—it is not over a solitary or selfish meal that you pray His prayer, "Give *us* this day our

daily bread;" and when you try to shut out from your compassion the brother who has need, you so far shut out the love of God—but He has made it an inevitable prompting of the Christian spirit; and whether it be Pastor Fliedner, with the Deaconesses of Kaiserswerth, or the founders and supporters of our asylums for the orphan, for the idiot, for the incurable, or those who give their time to visit the sick, to instruct the ignorant, to raise up and restore the fallen, they are obeying an instinct as unknown to the polished Greek and sturdy Roman as it was to the phlegmatic Chinaman or effeminate Hindu, but an instinct familiar to those whose own spirits have been melted by the matchless manifestation of the Divine benevolence, and who have learned to pray,

> "As we to others mercy show,
> We mercy beg from Heaven."

This Christian tenderness tells on the outside world. As a result of these two things in the midst of men—that great magazine of God's mercies, the gospel, and that fund of actual loving-kindness which the Spirit of God maintains in the minds of His people—as a result of these things, the world is far less harsh and cruel than it used to be. A little leaven has pervaded the whole lump, and many men who are not devout are kind, generous, humane. Living in an atmosphere filled more or less with Christian feeling, and impelled by the contagious example of Christian friends or kindred—constrained by love to the men whom the love of Christ constrains—they are led on to do such noble deeds, and

give such noble gifts, as would be no disgrace to Christian charity.

Equity or fairness is a Christian grace—that considerateness which puts a man in his neighbour's place, and does as he would be done by: and so is tenderness, compassion, self-sacrifice in saving the lost and relieving the wretched: and as a third excellence, thoroughly Christian, we might have instanced *Truth.* Unfortunately, the Church of Rome has found it needful to "lie for God," and its frightful doctrine of "pious frauds" has occasionally received countenance in the controversial tricks and prophetic quackeries of Protestant divines: but it is not for nothing that the awful apparition of Ananias and Sapphira meets us so early in the Christian history; and partly as a result of that solemn warning, and still more as the reflection of the whole spirit of the gospel, wherever there has been genuine piety there has always been a notable measure of truth and God-fearing uprightness; and co-existent with this stricter veracity within the Church there may be discerned a keener sense of honour in the world. There is more than enough of fraud and falsehood still; but surely the number grows of those whose "word" is better than a bad man's "oath," and who, when they have sworn to their own hurt, stand by it. Even controversy is conducted with greater candour; men are getting more courage to confess their errors or their ignorance; and not only have statesmen been found bold enough to avow as their policy "a policy of peace," but wise enough to adopt a policy of openness and honesty.

Not only are they the Christian ethics which have got

diffused through the morals of society, but the other ingredients of the gospel have also told. If you were asking a company of believing men, "What is the greatest benefit which Christianity has conferred on you?" one might answer, "New light. Whereas I once was blind, now I see. I see myself, lost and ruined, with a depraved nature and a soul destroyed by sin. And I see God. I see Him holy, yet more than helpful; I see Him 'the just God and the Saviour,' infinitely pure, yet unspeakably compassionate, desiring my salvation, and doing all things in the way of pardon and assistance which are needful to secure it. New light." A second might say, "It is new life that I owe to the gospel. It has given me a new Friend in Jesus Christ, a new motive in the love of God, a new prospect in the hope full of immortality." And a third, in reply to the question, "What has Christianity done for you?" might answer as truly, "It has given me a new nature. Things for which I once had no heart are now my element, and in that law of God I do delight which was once my terror and my task." Corresponding to such types of piety are the influences which Christianity exerts on those who have not yet come within its pale. The far regards and lofty aims of one high-hearted Christian, if they do not lift his neighbours to heaven, may at least raise them for a moment from the dust; and the courage of one who has faith in God and no fears for the future will sometimes animate feebler spirits in the hour of danger: just as God's presence with the believer helps to make Him real and present to the worldling. Like the drop of essence which flavours the pitcher—like

the flask of attar which scents the whole chamber—like the hidden leaven which gives to the three measures a new attribute; though it is still a little flock, and the followers of Christ a mournful minority, the faith of this little Church keeps the world from atheism, its blessed hope keeps the world from many a mad experiment, as well as from the demoralizing blackness of despair, and its love, however limited, is a cheering, elevating influence, which, in the face of all selfish and utilitarian tendencies, maintains that sentiment which gives to society its meaning and its charm, and which, in the midst of materialistic influences, reminds it ever and anon of that higher sphere whence the sweet exotic comes.

You see your calling, Christian brother. You are here to serve Christ and extend His kingdom. Ye are the salt of the land, ye are the lights of the world, ye are the leaven which is to pervade and new-mould society. This end is so far answered when any man carries on his common work, his daily calling, on Christian principles. It is perhaps still more decidedly subserved when a man has a calling capable of being consecrated—as when the artist wields his pencil to exhibit the dangers and deformity of vice, the charms of domestic virtue, the majesty of Christian heroism—as when the man of letters employs his pen for the rebuke of popular evils, for the praise and protection of scriptural faith and piety. But it will also be subserved by those who, in the interests of heaven's kingdom, and in order to promote God's ascendency, are steadily and unostentatiously employing the influence God has given. It was not only gold, but frankincense

and myrrh, which the Eastern sages presented to the new-come Saviour. You may have little gold to give, but myrrh in the bundle, incense in the censer, a good man's influence when living, his memory when gone, will go far in the way of fostering worth and restraining evil. You have such influence; use it. You are not a cypress, strict and straight up, with arms appressed and pointing all to heaven—like a hermit of the Theban desert, like some of the old English Puritans: your branches spread; let those who come under your shadow—your friends, your children—let them there find pleasant fruits and leaves of healing. And the gospel which makes you so rich and strong, it is not a mere amulet or charm which you carry about for your own protection, but a blessing with which you are intrusted for the world's welfare. So do not hoard it. Do not conceal your convictions, but on right occasions enforce your belief and urge your principles; and even though you may not in every instance succeed in saving a soul from death, it is something to dispel a single prejudice or prevent a single sin.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LITERARY ATTRACTIONS OF THE BIBLE.

God made the present earth as the Home of Man; but had He meant it as a mere lodging, a world less beautiful would have served the purpose. There was no need for the carpet of verdure, or the ceiling of blue; no need for the mountains, and cataracts, and forests; no need for the rainbow, no need for the flowers. A big, round island, half of it arable, and half of it pasture, with a clump of trees in one corner, and a magazine of fuel in another, might have held and fed ten millions of people; and a hundred islands, all made in the same pattern, big and round, might have held and fed the population of the globe. But man is something more than the animal which wants lodging and food. He has a spiritual nature, full of keen perceptions and deep sympathies. He has an eye for the sublime and the beautiful, and his kind Creator has provided man's abode with affluent materials for these nobler tastes. He has built Mont Blanc, and molten the lake in which its image sleeps. He has intoned Niagara's thunder, and has breathed the zephyr which sweeps its spray. He has shagged the steep with its cedars, and besprent the

meadow with its king-cups and daisies. He has made it a world of fragrance and music,—a world of brightness and symmetry,—a world where the grand and the graceful, the awful and lovely, rejoice together. In fashioning the Home of Man, the Creator had an eye to something more than convenience, and built, not a barrack, but a palace,—not a Union-workhouse, but an Alhambra; something which should not only be very comfortable, but very splendid and very fair; something which should inspire the soul of its inhabitant, and even draw forth the "very good" of complacent Deity.

God also made the Bible as the Guide and Oracle of Man; but had He meant it as a mere lesson-book of duty, a volume less various and less attractive would have answered every end. A few plain paragraphs, announcing God's own character and His disposition towards us sinners here on earth, mentioning the provision which He has made for our future happiness, and indicating the different duties which He would have us perform,—a few simple sentences would have sufficed to tell what God is, and what He would have us to do. There was no need of the picturesque narrative and the majestic poem,—no need of the proverb, the story, and the psalm. A chapter of theology, and another of morals; a short account of the Incarnation and the great Atonement, and a few pages of rules and directions for the Christian life, might have contained the vital essence of Scripture, and have supplied us with a Bible of simplest meaning and smallest size. And in that case the Bible would have been consulted only by those rare and wistful spirits to whom the

great Hereafter is a subject of anxiety, who are really anxious to know what God is, and how they themselves may please Him. But in giving that Bible, its Divine Author had regard to the mind of man. He knew that man has more curiosity than piety, more taste than sanctity; and that more persons are anxious to hear some new, or read some beauteous thing, than to read or hear about God and the Great Salvation. He knew that few would ever ask, What must I do to be saved? till they came in contact with the Bible itself; and, therefore, He made the Bible not only an instructive book, but an attractive one,—not only true, but enticing. He filled it with marvellous incident and engaging history; with sunny pictures from Old-World scenery, and affecting anecdotes from the patriarch times. He replenished it with stately argument and thrilling verse, and sprinkled it over with sententious wisdom and proverbial pungency. He made it a book of lofty thoughts and noble images,—a book of heavenly doctrine, but withal of earthly adaptation. In preparing a guide to immortality, Infinite Wisdom gave not a dictionary, nor a grammar, but a Bible—a book which, in trying to reach the heart of man, should captivate his taste; and which, in transforming his affections, should also expand his intellect. The pearl is of great price; but even the casket is of exquisite beauty. The sword is of ethereal temper, and nothing cuts so keen as its double edge; but there are jewels on the hilt, an exquisite inlaying on the scabbard. The shekels are of the purest ore; but even the scrip which contains them is of a texture more curious than any which the artists

of earth can fashion. The apples are gold; but even the basket is silver.

In speaking of the literary excellence of the Holy Scriptures, we are aware of a twofold disadvantage. Some have never looked on the Bible as a readable book. They remember how they got long tasks from it at school, and spelled their arduous way through polysyllabic chapters and joyless genealogies. And in later life they have only heard it sounded forth monotonously from the drowsy desk, or freezing in the atmosphere of some sparse and wintry sanctuary. So irksome and insipid has every association made it, that were they shut up in a parlour with an old directory, and an old almanac, and an old Bible, they would spend the first hour on the almanac, and the next on the directory, and would die of *ennui* before they opened the Bible. They have got at home a set of their favourite classics, and on a quiet evening they will take down a volume of Chaucer or Spenser, or even Thomas Fuller or Jeremy Taylor, or an Elzevir Virgil, or a Grenville Homer, and read at it till long beyond their time of rest; but to them the Bible is no classic. They do not care to keep it in some taking or tasteful edition, and they would never dream of sitting down to read it as a recreation or an intellectual treat. And then there are others in a happier case to whom that Bible is so sacred—who have found it so full of solemn import, and to whom its every sentence is so fraught with Divine significance, that they feel it wrong or revolting to read it with the critic's eye. They would rather peruse it on their bended knees, praying God to show them the wonders in His

Word, than, with the scholar's pencil in their hand, ready to seize on each happy phrase and exquisite figure. They would rather peruse it in the company of Luther or Leighton, than along with Erasmus or Grotius. We can understand the feelings of each. But we trust that both will bear with us a little whilst we endeavour to show that if no book be so important as the Bible, so none is more interesting, and that the book which contains most of the beautiful is the one which must ever remain the standard of the good and the true.

And here we would only add one remark which it is important to bear in memory. The rhetorical and poetical beauties of Scripture are merely incidental. Its authors wrote, not for glory or display—not to astonish or amuse their brethren, but to instruct them and make them better. They wrote for God's glory, not their own; they wrote for the world's advantage, not to aggrandize themselves. Demosthenes composed his most splendid oration in order to win the crown of eloquence; and the most elaborate effort of ancient oratory—the "Panegyric" to which Isocrates devoted fifteen years—was just an essay written for a prize. How different the circumstances in which the speech on Mars Hill was spoken; and the farewell sermon in the upper chamber at Troas! Herodotus and Thucydides composed their histories with a view to popular applause; and Pindar's fiery pulse beat faster in prospect of the great Olympic gathering and the praises of assembled Greece. How opposite the circumstances in which the Seer of Horeb penned his faithful story, and Isaiah and Jeremiah poured forth their fearless denuncia-

tions of popular sins! The most superb of modern historians confesses the flutter which he felt when the last line of his task was written, and he thought that perhaps his fame was established. A more important history concludes: "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name." And some of you will remember the proud *finale* in which the Roman lyrist predicts for himself immortal celebrity.[1] Alongside of his eloquent but egotistic vaticination, you cannot do better than read the last words of Israel's sweet singer,—"HIS name shall endure for ever; HIS name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things; and blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended."

Remembering then that the Bible contains no ornamental passages, nothing written for mere display, that its steadfast purpose is, "Glory to God in the highest," and the truest blessedness of man,—we repeat that that Bible abounds in passages of the purest beauty and stateliest grandeur, all the grander and all the more beautiful because they are casual and unsought. The fire which flashes from the iron hoof of the Tartar steed as he scours the

[1] "Exegi monumentum ære perennius.
. . . . Usque ego postera
Crescam laude recens," etc.
—HOR. lib. iii. 1. 30.

midnight path is grander than the artificial firework; for it is the casual effect of speed and power. The clang of ocean as he booms his billows on the rock, and the echoing caves give chorus, is more soul-filling and sublime than all the music of the orchestra; for it is the music of that main so mighty that there is a grandeur in all it does,—in its sleep a melody, and in its march a stately psalm. And in the bow which paints the melting cloud there is a beauty which the stained glass or gorgeous drapery emulates in vain; for it is the glory which gilds beneficence, the brightness which bespeaks a double boon, the flush which cannot but come forth when both the sun and shower are there. The style of Scripture has all this glory. It has the gracefulness of a high utility; it has the majesty of intrinsic power; it has the charm of its own sanctity; it never labours, never strives, but, instinct with great realities and bent on blessed ends, it has all the translucent beauty and unstudied power which you might expect from its lofty object and all-wise Author.

There is no phenomenon in nature so awful as a thunder-storm; and almost every poet, from Homer and Virgil down to Dante and Milton, or rather down to Grahame or Pollok, has described it. In the Bible, too, we have a thunder-storm, the 29th Psalm—the description of a tempest, which, rising from the Mediterranean, and travelling by Lebanon, and along the inland mountains, reaches Jerusalem, and sends the people into the temple-porticoes for refuge. And besides those touches of terror in which the geographical progress of the tornado is

described, it derives a sacred vitality and power from the presence of Jehovah in each successive peal. "The voice of the Lord is on the sea: the God of glory thundereth: the Lord is on the mighty sea. The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory. The Lord sitteth upon the water-torrent: yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever. The Lord will give strength unto his people:" (and now the sun shines out again;) "the Lord will bless his people with peace."[1]

Amongst those who have expressly written on the Sublime, it is agreed that the most thrilling spectacle is one whose obscure outline or vague presence at once suggests the supernatural. Of this sublime in terror, the fourth of Job supplies an acknowledged instance:—

[1] Over many of the Psalms it sheds a flood of new significance when the reader understands their mechanism, as in the case of many it has been disclosed by the labours of Lowth, Horsley, Hengstenberg, and others. It was one morning in his house at Dundee, that a friend dear and ever memorable, Robert M'Cheyne, showed us the geographical structure of this 29th Psalm. And certainly it enhances the meaning of this majestic ode when we conceive the spectator-psalmist as standing with the awe-struck multitude in the temple-porch, watching the march of the thunder-storm as it advances from the Mediterranean or "mighty" sea, and imagining its progress from Lebanon, adown the range of Hermon, and the course of the Jordan, till it darkens over the wilderness and reaches Jerusalem and bursts in a water-flood around themselves.

"A thing, too, was imparted to me secretly,
Mine ear received a whisper with it.
In tumults of night-visions,
When deep sleep falls on men,
Panic came on me, and horror,
And the multitude of my bones did shake.
A spirit passed before my face,
The hair of my flesh stood up:
It stood—but I could not discern its form:
A figure before mine eyes:
—Silence—and I heard a voice,
'Shall a mortal be righteous before God?
Shall a man be pure before his Maker?'"

But perhaps the poetic beauty in which the Bible most excels all other books is description of the world around us. A better idea of the poetic susceptibility was never given, than when John Foster called it *physiopathy*, "the faculty of pervading all Nature with one's own being, so as to have a perception, a life, an agency, in all things." "If you observe a man of this order, though his body be a small thing, completely invested with a little cloth, he expands his being in a grand circle all around him. He feels as if he grew in the grass and flowers and groves; as if he stood on yonder distant mountain-top, conversing with clouds, or sublimely sporting among their imaged precipices, caverns, and ruins. He flows in that river, chafes in its cascades, smiles in the water-lilies, frisks in the fishes. He is sympathetic with every bird, and seems to feel the sentiment that prompts the song of each; and from this ability to transfuse himself into every object around him, in a certain sense he inherits all things." To which we would only add, that besides this poetic sympathy with Nature the sacred writers seem to have

possessed a still purer perception of what Nature is. They not only could tranfuse their own life into the landscape, but they could discern how much of the living God is there. And instead of that material semblance which a Claude or a Rembrandt might project on his canvas, or Virgil or Shenstone might embody in his verse, they inhaled Jehovah's breath and hearkened to Jehovah's voice, and received into their adoring bosoms as much of Jehovah's life as lingers in our defaced and fallen world. Hence it comes to pass, that the Book which contains by far the brightest and most vivacious landscape—the holiest and happiest view of the things around us, is the Word of God. Seen in His own light, and delineated by His own pencil, the mountains "skip," the seas "clap hands," the little hills "rejoice," and the valleys "sing." The Bible landscape has a limpid freshness, as viewed by an eye which carnality has never dimmed, or rather that loving and observant eye which grace has made young again. It needs no Dryads to people its woodlands, no Oreads to flit over its mountains, no Naiads to give mirth to its waters or music to its streams; for a higher animation fills them, and every chiming brook and fluttering spray, every zephyr and every blessed sound, is a note in God's own anthem,—"Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons and all deeps: fire and hail: snow and vapours: stormy wind fulfilling his word: mountains and all hills: fruitful trees and all cedars: beasts and all cattle: creeping things and flying fowl: kings of the earth and all people: princes and all judges of the earth: both young men and

maidens: old men and children: let them praise the name of the Lord; for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven."

But instead of collecting illustrative passages from what may be called the pastoral and descriptive poetry of Scripture, we shall quote one which, whilst a graphic description, like most kindred portions of Holy Writ, owes its sublimity to its moral power; and we quote it the rather, because our own translation does not bring out its entire significance. It is the 28th chapter of Job, and the question is, Where is Wisdom to be found? and, What is the abode or hiding-place of Understanding? Is it a deposit hidden in the bowels of the earth?—a treasure for which we must ransack the caverns underneath, or rummage in the rifted rock? Is it a secret for which we must bribe the grave? or which death alone can whisper in the ear? And so it commences with a magnificent account of the miner's doings underground:—

'Truly there is a mine for the silver,
And a place for the gold so fine:
Iron is dug up from the earth,
And the earth pours forth its copper.
Man digs into darkness,
And explores to the utmost bound
The stones of dimness and death shade;
He breaks up the veins from the matrice,
Which, unthought of, and underfoot,
Are drawn forth to gleam among mankind.
The surface pours forth bread,
But the subterranean winds a fiery region.
Its stones are the sapphires' bed,
And it hides the dust of gold.
It is a path which the eagle knows not,
Nor has the eye of the vulture scanned it,

The lion's whelp has not tracked it,
Nor the ravening lion pounced on it.
The miner thrusts his hand on the sparry ore,
And overturns the mountains by their roots.
He cuts a channel through the rock,
And espies each precious gem.
He binds up the oozing waters,
And darts a radiance through the gloom,
But, oh, where shall WISDOM be found?
And where is the place of UNDERSTANDING!
Man knows not its source,
For it is not to be found in the land of the living.
The sea says, 'It is not in me;'
And 'Not in me,' echoes the abyss.
Solid gold cannot be given for it,
Nor silver be weighed for its purchase.
It cannot be bought for the ingot of Ophir,
For the precious onyx or the sapphire.
The burnished gold and crystal cannot equal it,
Nor golden trinkets match it.
Talk not of corals or pearls,
For the attraction of Wisdom is beyond rubies.
The topaz of Ethiopia cannot rival it,
Nor the purest bullion barter it.

Whence, then, cometh Wisdom?
And where is the place of Understanding?
Hid from the eyes of all living,
And unseen by the fowls of the air,
Destruction and death say,
'We have heard its fame with our ears.'
God understands its track;
He knows its dwelling-place;
For to the ends of the earth He sees,
And under all heaven surveys.
When He weighed out the air
And meted out the water;
When He fixed the course of the rain
And the path of the hurricane;
Then did He eye it and proclaim it:
He prepared it and searched it out,

And unto man He said,
'Behold ! the fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom,
And to depart from evil is Understanding.'"[1]

It would consume all our space were we transcribing from the Prophets and the Psalms those passages of grandeur which make the sacred text so awful and august; and of that class we shall give no more. But perhaps the sublime, though the highest order of literary effort, is not, after all, the most popular. Were it put to the world at large, we should, probably, find that the books most men like best are those which are less exalted above the every-day level, and whose simple incidents, and cheerful glimpses, and human pathos, bring them home to every one's comprehension and feeling. In this sort of narrative that world's book, the Bible, abounds. Do you ask for tenderness? "And Ruth said to her mother-in-law, Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." Do you ask for pathos? "And Cushi said, Tidings, my lord the king; for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee. And the king said unto Cushi, Is the young man, Absalom, safe? And Cushi answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise up against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is. And the king

[1] Some lines of the above may be slightly paraphrased; but the version is essentially the same as that of Dr. Mason Good, with modifications from Dr. Lee and others.

was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he wept thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son." Or do you ask for natural, simple, and affecting narrative? "A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's house have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said unto his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his

hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found."

We could very willingly have extended these remarks to other species of composition, and would have liked to show particularly how many models of eloquent argument and engaging discourse are contained in the New Testament. But on the wide field of Revelation, with its intellectual opulence, we forbear to enter. We can easily understand how the Bible was one of the four volumes which always lay on Byron's table; and it would be easy to fill a volume with the testimonies, witting or unwitting, which painters, sculptors, orators, and poets, have rendered to the most thought-suggesting book in all the universe. It never aims at fine writing. It never steps aside for a moment for the sake of a felicitous expression or a good idea. It has only one end—to tell the world about God and the great salvation; and yet the wonder is, that it has incidentally done more to supply rhetoric with powerful and happy diction, and literature with noble thoughts and images, and the fine arts with memorable subjects, than perhaps all other books that have been written. The world's Maker is the Bible's Author, and the same profusion which furnished so lavishly the abode of man, has filled so richly and adorned so brilliantly the Book of man.

Just as that Bible is the great storehouse and repertory of intellectual *wealth*, so we must add that its vital truth is the grand source of intellectual *power*. When Sir Samuel Romilly visited Paris immediately after the first

French Revolution, he remarked, "Everything I saw convinced me that, independently of our future happiness and our sublimest enjoyments in this life, religion is necessary to the comforts, the conveniences, and even the elegances and lesser pleasures of life. Not only have I never met with a writer truly eloquent who did not at least affect to believe in religion, but I never met with one in whom religion was not the richest source of his eloquence." And we are persuaded that in things intellectual the rule will hold, that piety is power. We are persuaded that no productions of genius will survive to the end of all things in which there is not something of God; and we are further persuaded, that no book can exercise a lasting ascendency over mankind on which His blessing has not been implored, and in which his Spirit does not speak. Of all the powers and faculties of the human mind, the noblest is the one which God has created for Himself; and if that reverential or adoring faculty do not exist, or if it be by suicidal hands extirpated, the world will soon cease to feel any force in the man who has lost his faith in God. The stateliest compartment in this human soul is the one which, in creating it, Jehovah reserved for His own throne-room and presence-chamber; and however curiously decorated or gorgeously furnished the other compartments be, if this be empty and void, it will soon diffuse a blank and beggarly sensation over all the rest. And thus, whilst the Voltaires and Rousseaus, of Atheist memory, are waxing old and vanishing from the firmament of letters, names of less renown, but more religion, brighten to a greater lustre. So true is it that

no man can long keep a hold of his fellow-men, unless he himself first has hold of God.

But if a sincere and strenuous Theism be thus important—such natural faith in God as upbore the wing of Plato in his long and ethereal flights, or bulged the Saxon thews of Shakespeare in his mightiest efforts, incomparably more prevalent is that intellectual prowess which a scriptural faith produces. He is no Unknown God whom the believer in Jesus worships, and it is no ordinary inspiration which that God of light and love supplies to His servants. It would be easy to enumerate one genius after another which the gospel kindled, if it did not create. That gospel, beyond all controversy, was our own Milton's poetic might. It was the struggling energy which, after years of deep musing and rapt devotion, after years of mysterious muttering and anxious omen, sent its pyramid of flame into old England's dingy hemisphere, and poured its molten wealth—its lava of gold and gems, fetched deep from classic and patriarchal times, adown the russet steep of Puritan theology. It was the fabled foot which struck from the sward of Cowper's mild and silent life a joyous Castalia—a fountain deep as Milton's fire, and like it tinctured with each learned and sacred thing it touched in rising, but soft and full as Siloah's fount, which "flowed fast by the oracle of God." And that gospel was the torch which, on the hills of Renfrewshire, fired a young spirit,[1]—himself both sacrifice and altar-pile,—till Britain spied the light, and wondered at the brief but brilliant beacon. But why name the individual instances? What is modern learning, and the march of intellect, and the

[1] Pollok.

reading million, but one great monument of the gospel's quickening power? Three or four hundred years ago the classics were revived; at the same time the gospel was restored. Digging in the Pompeii of the middle age, Lorenzo and Leo found the lamps in which the old classic fires had burned; but there was no oil in the lamps, and they had long since gone out. For models of candelabra and burners there could not be better than Livy, and Horace, and Plato, and Pindar; but the faith which once filled them—the old Pagan fervour—was long since extinct, and the lamps were only fit for the shelf of the antiquary. But it was then that, in the crypt of the convent, Luther, and Zuingle, and Melanchthon, observed a line of supernatural light, and with lever and mattock lifted the gravestone, and found the gospel which the Papist had buried. There it had flamed, "a light shining in a dark place," through unsuspected ages—unquenchable in its own immortality—the long-lost lamp in the sepulchre. Jupiter was dead, and Minerva had melted into ether, and Apollo was grey with eld, and the most elegant idols of antiquity had gone to the moles and the bats. But there is One who cannot die and does not change—and the Fountain of Scriptural Learning is He who is also the Fountain of Life—the Alpha and the Omega—Jesus the Son of God. From His gospel it was that the old classic lamps, when filled with fresh oil, were kindled again; and at that gospel it was that Bacon, and Locke, and Milton, and Newton, and all the mighty spirits of modern Europe, caught the fire which made them blaze, the meteors of our firmament, the marvels of our favoured time.

Should any one read these lines who is ambitious to be the lasting teacher or the extensive light of society—to paint, or think, or sing, for the students of a future age, let him remember that nothing can immortalize the works of genius if there be no gospel in them. The facts of that gospel are the world's main stock of truth—the fire of that gospel is the only Promethean spark which can ignite our dead truths into quenchless and world-quickening powers.

For practical and devotional purposes, we could desire no better version of the Bible than our own truthful and time-hallowed translation. But for those purposes to which we have now been adverting,—for the sake of its intelligent literary perusal, we have sometimes wished that either in the originals or in English, some judicious editor would give us, each in a separate fasciculus, the several contributions of each sacred penman. As it is, with the sixty-six volumes of the Bible all compressed into a single tome, we are apt to regard them, not only as alike the Holy Scriptures, which they are, but as contemporary compositions, which they are not. We forget that, in point of time, there is the same interval between Moses and Matthew, as there is betwixt the close of the canon and the compilation of the Augsburg Confession. And, with each portion comminuted into those little paragraphs called *verses*, we are apt to lose sight of the characteristic style of the various compositions. An epistle looks like a poem, and a history reads like a collection of adages and apophthegms. But allowing one book to contain the

Minor Prophets, and another the General Epistles, there would still remain upwards of twenty inspired penmen whose writings might, much to their mutual illustration, be bound up in separate volumes, and preserved in their individual identity. We should thus have in one volume all that Moses wrote, and in another, chronologically arranged, all the writings of Paul. One volume might contain all the psalms of David: another, those psalms (nearly as numerous) which were indited by Moses, and Asaph, and others. In one cover might be bound up the Gospel, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse of John; and in another, that divine Song, those Confessions of a converted philosopher, and that ancient "Wealth of Nations," which are the inspired bequest of the Imperial Solomon. And under such an arrangement might we not hope that books, usually read in chapters or smaller morsels, might sometimes be read continuously,—taken down from the shelf, as any attractive book would be taken, on a leisure evening, and read through at a single sitting? Might we not hope, in such a case, that whilst those who now read the Old and New Testaments would read them still, some who at present do not read the Bible might be tempted to read Paul, Moses, and Isaiah? And is it too sanguine to expect that, as the searching of the Scriptures and sacred knowledge thus increased, some who first resorted to the book for literary entertainment might learn from it the lessons which make wise to life everlasting?[1]

[1] The idea thus thrown out has since been realized. Each book of the Bible can now be obtained separately in the issues of the British and Foreign Bible Society, or in those of Messrs. Bagster.

At all events, theology has not yet turned to sufficient account the Bible's marvellous diversity. We know how opposite are the turns, and how various the temperaments of different people, and how unequal their capacities. One has a logician's intellect, and delights in a dialectic subtilty. Another has a prompt intuition, and deprecates as so much bamboozlement every ingenious or protracted argument. Some have the ideal faculty so strong, that they never understand a proposition rightly till it sparkles as a sentiment; poet-wise, their eyes are in the apex; they cannot descry matters of fact and homely truths, which creep along the ground or travel on all-fours; but in order to arrest a vision so sublime as theirs, thoughts must spread the wings of metaphor, and soar into the zenith; whilst others are so prosaic, that they are offended at all imagery, and grudge the time it takes to translate a trope or figure. Some minds are concrete, and cannot understand a general statement till they see a particular example. Others are so abstract, that an illustration is an interruption, and an example a waste of time. Most men love history, and nearly all men live much in the future. Some minds are pensive, some are cheerful; some are ardent, some are singularly phlegmatic. And had an angel penned the Bible, even though he could have condescended to the capacity of the lowliest reader, he could not have foreseen the turn and fitted the taste of every child of Adam. And had a mortal penman been employed, however versatile his talent, however many-faced his mind, he could not have made himself all things to his brethren, nor produced styles enow to mirror the

mental features of all mankind. In His wisdom and goodness the Most High has judged far better for our world; and using the agency of forty authors—transfusing through the peculiar tastes and temperaments of so many individuals (and these "men of like passions with ourselves") the self-same truths, the Spirit of God has secured for the Bible universal adaptation. For the pensive, there is the dirge of Jeremiah and the cloud-shadowed drama of Job. For the sanguine and hopeful, there sounds the blithe voice and there beats the warm pulse of old Galilean Peter. And for the calm, and contemplative, the peacefully-loving, there spreads like a molten melody, or an abysmal joy, the page—sunny, ecstatic, boundless—of John the Divine. The most homely may find the matter of fact, the unvarnished wisdom and plain sense, which is the chosen aliment of their sturdy understandings, in James's blunt reasonings; and the most heroic can ask no higher standard, no loftier feats, no consecration more intense, no spirituality more ethereal, than they will find in the Pauline Epistles. Those who love the sparkling aphorism and the sagacious paradox are provided with food convenient in the Proverbs; and for those whose poetic fancy craves a banquet more sublime, there are the dew of Hermon and Bozrah's red wine,—the tender freshness of pastoral hymns, and the purple tumult of triumphal psalms. And whilst the historian is borne back to ages so remote that grey tradition cannot recollect them, and athwart oblivious centuries, in nooks of brightness and in oases of light sees the patriarch groups clear, vivid, and familiar as the household scenes

of yesterday,—there is also a picture sketched for the explorers of the future. For whilst the Apocalyptic curtain slowly rises,—whilst the seven thunders shake its darkness palpable, and streaks of glory issue through its fringe of fire, the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven; and gazing on the pearly gates, and peaceful streets, and bowers of sanctity, our planet can scarce believe that she is gazing on herself,—that this is old Mother Earth grown young again,—that this vision of holiness and bliss is nothing more than Paradise restored—that "new" but ancient "earth in which dwelleth righteousness."

But in order rightly to appreciate this literary diversity of the Bible's several books, it is essential to remember the plenary inspiration of the Bible collective. Imagine the case of an accomplished evangelist. Suppose there were a missionary endowed with the gift of tongues, and called to ply his labours in different places at successive periods. He goes to France, and, addressing its vivacious inhabitants, he abandons the direct and sober style of his fatherland; every utterance is antithesis; every gem of thought is cut brilliant-wise; and the whole oration jigs on gay, elastic springs. He passes thence to Holland, and in order to conciliate its grave burghers his steady thoughts move on in sober procession, trim, concinnate, old-fashioned, orderly. Anon he finds himself amidst a tribe of Red Indians; and instantly his imagination spreads pinions of flame, and, familiar with thunder-water and burning mountains, his talk is to the tune of the tempest. And ending his progress in Arabia or Persia,

through the fantastic sermon skip shadowy antelopes or dream-like gazelles; whilst each interstice of thought is filled by a voluptuous mystery, like the voice of the darkling nightingale as it floats through air laden with jasmine or roses. And thus, "all things to all men," this gifted evangelist wins them all; whereas, had he spoken like an Oriental to the Red Indian, or like a Persian to the Hollander, he would have offended each, and would have been a barbarian to all. The Teacher is one—the same Evangelist everywhere. The truth, the theme is one—over and over again the same glorious gospel. Nay, the substance of each sermon is essentially one; for it is a new forth-pouring from the same fountain—another yearning from the same full heart. But to suit successive hearers the rhythm alters, the tune is changed.

Such is the principle on which the Great Evangelist has acted. When inditing sermons for the world, such is the principle on which the Divine Spirit has proceeded. Speaking to men, He has used the words of men. When on the two tables God wrote the Ten Commandments, He did not write them in the speech unutterable of the third heavens—He wrote them in Hebrew letters, Hebrew words, and Hebrew idiom; and had it so pleased Him, He might have given all the Scriptures in the self-same way. Employing no mortal pen whatever, from the top of Sinai He might have handed down the one Testament, and from the top of Olivet the other—the whole, from Genesis to Revelation, completed without human intervention, and on amaranthine leaves engraven in Heaven's own holograph. And in such a case there would have

been no dispute as to the extent of inspiration; there would have been no need that, like the electrometers of the meteorologist, theologians should invent tests of its intensity, nicely graduated from the zero of Superintendence up to the fulness of Suggestion. But Infinite Wisdom preferred another way. Inspiration He made the counterpart of the Incarnation; and as in the Incarnate Mystery we have, without mutual encroachment and without confusion, very God and very man, so in theopneustic Scripture we have a book, every sentence of which is truly human, and yet the whole of which is truly Divine. Holy *men* spake it, but holy men spake and wrote it as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. And just as when God sent His Son into the world, He sent Him not in the fashion of an angel, nor even in the fashion of a glorified and celestial man, but in all points like His brethren; so when He sent into the world His written word, it came not ready written with an angel's plume, but with reeds from the Jordan it was consigned to paper from the Nile, every word of it Hellenistic or Hebrew, and yet every word none the less heavenly. And though the unlettered disciple, who in the identity of the ultimate Author forgets the diversity of the intermediate scribes—though he loses less than the dry critic, who only recognises the mortal penman—that student alone will get the full good of His Bible who recognises the parallel facts—its perfect and all-pervasive divinity, its perfect and all-investing humanity. Or, to sum it up in the vivid words of Gaussen: "As a skilful musician, called to execute alone some masterpiece, puts his lips by turns to

the mournful flute, the shepherd's reed, the mirthful pipe, and the war-trumpet, so the Almighty God, to sound in our ears His eternal word, has selected from of old the instruments best suited to receive successively the breath of His Spirit. Thus we have in God's great anthem of revelation the sublime simplicity of John; the argumentative, elliptical, soul-stirring energy of Paul; the fervour and solemnity of Peter; the poetic grandeur of Isaiah; the lyric moods of David; the ingenuous and majestic narratives of Moses; the sententious and royal wisdom of Solomon. Yes, it was all this—it was Peter, Isaiah, Matthew, John, or Moses; but it was God." "And such ought to be the word of Jehovah—like Immanuel, full of grace and truth—at once in the bosom of God and in the heart of man—powerful and sympathizing—celestial and human—exalted, yet humble—imposing and familiar—God and man."

But here a compunctious thought comes over us. In the previous survey it seems as if we had gone, so many of us, to view a famous palace, and we have stood on the lawn in front, or looked up from the quadrangle, and told its towers and marked its bulwarks, and sketched some of its ornaments; but however commanding the elevation, however graceful the details, and however interesting the various styles, after all the glory is within. No doubt, there is a loveliness even in the letter of Scripture; but there is life for our souls in its Divine significance. Reader, do not rest till you are introduced to the interior. That Book which God has made the monument of the great redemption, and where He has put His own per-

petual Shekinah, do you choose it as the gymnasium where you may "nourish a youth" truly "sublime;" the castle where, in a world of impiety and an age of peril, you may find entrenchment for your faith and protection for your principles; the sanctuary at whose oracle you may find answers to your doubts and light upon your path; the spirit's home, whither your affections shall every day return, and where your character shall progressively ennoble into a conformity with such a royal residence.

Allow us, therefore, as a supplement to these remarks, to entreat you to peruse the Bible itself. With prayer, with expectation, with eyes alert and open, read it; in your most tranquil retirement read it; and when a few of you, who are friends like-minded, come together, read it; search it, sift it, talk about it, talk with it. And as he thus grows mighty in it, we promise each earnest Bible-student two rewards—it will make him both a wiser and holier man.

Wiser: for the sayings of God's Word are solid. There is a substance, which you must have noticed, cast on the sea shore, the medusa, or sea-nettle, as some sorts of it are called; an object rather beautiful as its dome of amber quivers in the sun. And a goodly size it often is,—so large at times that you could scarcely lift it: but it is all a watery pulp, and if you were carrying it home or trying to preserve it, the whole mass would quickly trickle out of sight and leave you nothing but a few threads of substance. Now, most books are like the marine medusa; fresh stranded, newly published (as the expression is),

they make a goodly show; but when a few suns have shone on them, the crystal jelly melts, the glittering cupola has vanished, and a few meagre fibres in your memory are all the residue of the once popular authorship. If you ever tried it, you must have been struck with the few solid thoughts, the few suggestive ideas, which survive from the perusal of the most brilliant of human books. Few of them can stand three readings; and of the memorabilia which you had marked in your first perusal, on reverting to them you find that many of them are not so striking, or weighty, or original as at first you fancied. But the Word of God is solid; it will stand a thousand readings; and the man who has gone over it the most frequently and the most carefully, is the surest of finding new wonders there. And just as the pearls of Scripture retain their intrinsic worth; as notwithstanding the frowsy head-gear they have garnished, the dull discourses they have adorned, they beam brighter than ever when the hand of a Vinet, or Chalmers, or Hall has arranged them anew into a coronet of sanctified taste and genius: so he among sages is the wealthiest man who has detected, and appropriated, and thoroughly possessed himself of the largest number of Bible sayings,—the merchantman who, seeking goodly pearls, has searched for them on this exhaustless strand.

And holier: for though we have hitherto spoken of the Bible very much as if it were a human book, you cannot be long versant with it till you find that it is something more. Like Tabor, it is a "mountain apart." Among the books of this world it is isolated, unique, peculiar; and

the farther up you get, the more acquainted you become with human books, and the more alongside of them you study the Book of God, the more amazed you will be at its outstanding elevation, its world-commanding pre-eminence. And just as in scaling a high mountain it needs no chemistry to analyse the air and inform the pilgrim that it is free from impurities; as every breath which paints a purer crimson on his cheek, and sends a tonic tide through all his suppling frame, would tell him its salubrity: so it needs no argument, no analysis, to persuade a spiritual mind that the air of heaven, the breath of God, is here. In his holier feelings as he reads, in the godly zeal and joyful strenuousness which requite each mounting footstep, with instinct sure his regenerate nature hails the congenial inspiration. And just as on Tabor's summit, when from heaven saints in snowy garments came down, and from Christ His own glory came through, it needed no refracting prism or condensing lens to assure them that it was a body of more than earthly brightness which they were gazing upon: so, dear reader, when a text is transfigured, when the Holy Spirit in the Word lets out its grace and glory, it will need no Paley nor Butler to prove that the Wisdom and the Power of God are there, but, radiant with emitted splendour, and dazzling your admiring eyes, in God's own light you will see it to be God's own Word. Nor can we wish for you a better wish than that thus you may be often surprised and overwhelmed. Yes, though your lot should be cast in the very midst of a noisy capital, and in the meridian of this man-wasting, money-making age, may you often

find your Sabbath, and your place of prayer, and your Bible, "a mountain apart." In blissful bewilderment may you forget the fascinations of earth and the pleasures of sin, and only wake up to find yourself alone with the Master. And none shall less grieve than he whom you have kindly accompanied thus far, if the literary attractions of the Book be in this manner merged and superseded in charms more spiritual—in attractions which, if they draw you to the Bible, will also draw you to the Saviour, and at last to heaven.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ILLUMINATED BIBLE AND THE LIVING EPISTLE.

Before the days of printing, the copyists sometimes took great pains with their manuscripts, and Bibles were then elaborately embellished. Traced in silver and gold and brilliant colours, occasionally executed on tinted parchment, the mere letters were often a gorgeous picture; and such illuminated manuscripts will always awaken the astonishment and delight of the tasteful antiquarian.

We do not print our Bibles in silver and gold; nor have we verses marked out from the others by their vermilion ink or bolder character. And yet, we have sometimes thought that every careful reader can illuminate his own copy as he proceeds. The book is all bright with passages which at one time or another have stirred or strengthened him; it is all radiant with texts which have aroused, or rebuked, or consoled him. On this verse he heard a sermon which he never can forget. This chapter is associated with some affecting event in his domestic history; and here is a paragraph which gave rise to a dialogue or meditation, ever memorable in his religious career.

Yet, were a hundred such illuminated Bibles compared, it would be found that in no two of them is the same set of passages marked and made prominent. Some may coincide; and a few emphatic sentences may be common to all; but, according to individual peculiarities or providential circumstances, it will turn out that portions fraught with glory to one eye, are obscure or ordinary to every other.

To take two instances. Suppose that each man were to mark in vermilion the verse that first convinced him of sin, or first made him anxious for the saving of his soul. In the Bible of the apostle Paul, the tenth command would be inscribed in red letters; for, as he tells us, "I had not known sin, except the commandment had said, Thou shalt not covet." In the Bible of Alexander Henderson, it would be, "He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber;" for that was the shaft which pierced the conscience of the unconverted minister. In the Bible of the Ironside soldier, the rubric would be found at Ecclesiastes xi. 9; for it was there that the bullet stopped, which but for the interposing Bible, would have pierced his bosom; and when the battle was over, he read, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

Or, suppose that each were to mark in golden letters the text which has been to him the gate of heaven; the

text through whose open lattice a reconciled God has looked forth on him, or through whose telescope he first has glimpsed the Cross. The Ethiopian chamberlain would mark the fifty-third of Isaiah; for it was when reading about the lamb led to the slaughter, that his eye was directed to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world, and he went on his way rejoicing. The English martyr, Bilney, would indicate the faithful saying, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief;" for it was in sight of these words that the burden fell from his back which fasts and penances had only rendered more weighty. There was "a stricken deer" who had long been panting for the water-brooks, but he had yet found no comfort; when, one day, listlessly taking up a Testament, it opened at the words, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past," and instantly he realized the sufficiency of the atonement, and embraced the gospel: and, doubtless, the Bard of Olney would signalize by the most brilliant memorial the spot where the Sun of Righteousness first shone into his soul.—"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen." These were the words which instantly converted into a living temple the calm and stately mind of Jonathan Edwards; and we may be sure that,—like Jacob, who, at Luz, would always see lingering the light of the ladder,—every time he returned to the passage, even in his most cursory perusal, the devout theologian would perceive a surviving trace of that manifestation

which into his vacant, wistful soul brought "the only wise God," and in glorifying that God gave him an object worthy of the vastest powers and the longest existence.

Such is the Divine variety of Scripture; and thus from the stores of religious biography might be compiled a sort of historical commentary, showing what service in the way of "doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness," the different passages have done. It would be found that in this quiver there are hundreds of arrows which have pierced the conscience and convinced of sin. It would be found that from this tree of life many leaves have dropped, and proved effectual to the healing of such wounds. It would be found that in this garden there hardly grows an herb, but some visitor has been regaled by its beauty or revived by its fragrance; and those which have not been sweet to the taste, have, in their very bitterness, yielded a salutary tonic. How many a text should we find invested with its true and touching legend! This was the lamp which lighted such a pilgrim through that ominous eclipse; and this was the hidden manna which, in the howling wilderness, restored his soul. Here is the smooth stone with which he struck down that terrible temptation, and here is the good sword with which he cut off its head. Here is the harp on which he discoursed sweet music when God gave him songs in the night; and there is the staff with which he was comforted when he walked through the valley.

An illuminated Bible makes an illustrative reader; and if, in your private perusal, you come ever and anon on passages made dear and memorable by their bearing on

your personal history, in your own turn you will, in some measure, supply that commentary which, of all others, is the greatest desideratum,—a legible Christian, an epistle of Christ that may be known and read of all men.

Perhaps our reader is a young man. Perhaps he is a young man of enthusiasm and energy. In exuberant health, and with spirits briskly bounding, he has the prospect not only of living long, but living largely—a man who will feel in every fibre all the influences of the coming age, and who will be himself no mean influence in it.

Brother, look before you. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" In this abundance of life, and this measure of ability, God has given you a solemn trust. You cannot help telling on others for good or evil. And when a few years are past, you will have done a great deal to deepen the perdition, or to heighten the bliss, of yourself and others.

Methinks we hear you say, "I don't want to be vicious; nay, I would rather be uncommonly virtuous. I would like to be a better man than most of your so-called Saints. I am sick of their affectations and hypocrisies. I cannot bear their cant. I want to be in every action sincere and earnest,—every atom true. I cannot fill up a ready-made formula: I cannot stow myself away in the stiff exuviæ of a misshapen antiquity. I must be original, independent, real. I shall make my own model, and then I shall make myself."

By all means be genuine; nay, by all means be original. But, on the part of a creature, what is the truest origin-

ality? Is it not the closest copying of perfection? that is, the most implicit imitation of the Creator's originals? When Phidias or Praxiteles took a block of marble, did he say to himself, "Now, I shall make a new thing under the sun:—I shall make a figure which can suggest to the beholder nothing that moveth upon the face of the earth or in the waters under the earth:—something so novel, that it has never entered into the heart of man to conceive it, and nobody will guess where the model was found?" Had he said this, he would have produced an original of that sorry sort which we call an oddity,—something very grotesque and ungainly,—something like an African fetich or a Hindu pagod. But the great artist said, "I shall make, as near as possible, a perfect man. Gathering up hints of strength and symmetry wherever I can find them, I shall devoutly endeavour to realize that exquisite model which was in the eye of the Divine Artist himself:" and, with the humility of genius, content to copy,—limb by limb, and lineament by lineament, there came out from the dead rock the most unique of all originalities,—a perfect figure, a glorified humanity,—a vision of power and joy which makes us understand how very good, once on a time, was this material frame,—how fearfully and wonderfully made at first,—how wonderful and fearful the Resurrection may see it all again.

The Belvidere Apollo is the most unique and original of sculptures, because it is the most earnest and successful of imitations. As far as he could catch sight of it, the artist kept constantly in view the model supplied by the Creator; and it is by combining so skilfully every frag-

ment of peculiar beauty or vigour which came in his way, and by copying these so faithfully, that he has realized such a splendid conception.

Now, making one proviso—remarking that all genuine goodness is spontaneous—that it is excellence followed for its own sake, not mimicked for admiration's sake—you will find that *that goodness will turn out the most original, not which makes its own model, or strikes out its own style, but which most closely copies Perfection.* This book supplies such a model. It exhibits a Pattern-Man,—a wearer of our intellect and will and affections, who never spoke a word that was not the right one, and who never did a right deed so that even He Himself could have done it better. This peerless Pattern,—this Man so elevated, yet so tender,—so loyal to God, yet so loving to those around Him,—so separate from sin, yet so void of sanctimoniousness,—the Word sets before you, and God says, Be ye followers of Christ. Walk as Christ also walked. Let the mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. And a few sublime spirits, made generous by the Spirit of God, have been seized with a blessed ambition, and not because men would admire them, but because they were smitten by goodness so charming, they have gazed on it, and pondered it, and imbibed it, till they were sensibly changed into the same image, and men felt, "There you go, so noble, so lovely. We know where you have been: you could not have attained an excellence so charming, had not Jesus Christ once been in the world, and had you not somehow been brought in contact with Him."

The most polished Englishman of the last century was

Philip Dormer Stanhope, the fourth Earl of Chesterfield. High-born and well-bred, clever, eloquent, and witty, and endowed with a large amount of natural amenity, he was bent on distinction. To dazzle his contemporaries was the business of his life. He was a man who made his own model. From the speeches of Cicero, from the epigrams of Martial, from the *salons* of Paris and Versailles, he gleaned the several ingredients of classic grace and modern refinement, and sought to combine them in the courtier, the statesman, and orator. He had no God. In the shrine where the Most High should be, there was a dim outline which looked very like a colossal Stanhope carrying a young Chesterfield in its arms; but, unless this mixture of self-idolatry and son-worship deserve the name, there was no religion in the man. He had his reward. At a levee, or in a drawing-room, he moved "the admired of all admirers." Few made such formidable speeches in Parliament. None uttered so many brilliant sayings in society. He got ribbons, plaudits, diplomatic appointments, the smiles of the fair, the envy of his peers; everything except true human affection; everything except the approbation of God and good men. Should any one wish to repeat the man, the mould is still extant. It will be found in Lord Chesterfield's "Letters to his Son;"—a book of which our great moralist said, in effect, that "it inculcates the morals of a profligate with the manners of a dancing-master." But before taking more trouble, it is well to know the result. At the close he confessed that his life had been as joyless as it had been selfish and hollow: "I have recently read Solomon

with a kind of sympathetic feeling. I have been as wicked and as vain, though not as wise as he: but now I am old enough to feel the truth of his reflection, 'All is vanity and vexation of spirit.'" Repartees sparkled on his dying lips, but all was dreary within, all was darkness ahead. The fame for which he lived expired before himself; and now truth declines to write his epitaph, and virtue has no garlands for his grave.

Still a boy, while this old worldling lay dying, William Wilberforce soon grew up, and the grace of God made him a Christian. That is, it taught him to live not to himself, but to the glory of God. It taught him to worship. It showed him that he was not his own proprietor; that he had no right to make his own enjoyment his chief pursuit; and that he must put all his faculties at God's disposal. In the Bible he found the model on which God would have him form his character. He studied it. He prayed over it. He watched himself, and struggled with his evil tendencies. God's Spirit strengthened him, and gave him wonderful self-conquest. Retaining all his natural elasticity, his wit, his bright fancy, his melodious voice and fluent speech,—his random hilarity was exchanged for conscientious kindness, and all his gifts of mind and station were devoutly laid at the feet of his Redeemer. With his pen he expounded to the highest classes that system of vital piety which Whitefield and Wesley had already preached to the populace; and carrying it to the dinner-tables of Clapham, and the evening assemblies of Piccadilly, many who fancied religion too severe in the sermons of Bishop Porteus or the strictures

of Hannah More, confessed to its loveliness in the life of Mr. Wilberforce. Then, in his public career,—keeping himself on purpose "pure,"—avoiding office, never using for personal ends the vast ascendency over others which his fascinating goodness gave him, any more than the *prestige* of his mighty Yorkshire constituency; alike on the floor of St. Stephen's and on the platform of Freemasons' Tavern, he consecrated to every humane and Christian cause "a persuasive and pathetic eloquence, chastened by a pure taste, varied by extensive information, enriched by classical allusion, sometimes elevated by the more sublime topics of Holy Writ—the thoughts and the spirit

'That touched Isaiah's hallowed lips with fire.'"[1]

How much the individual advocacy of one so loved and honoured effected for Missionary and Bible Societies, it would be difficult to tell; but it is hardly metaphor to say that Africa wept when he died. His country will never forget him: for although poets, warriors, and statesmen in numbers repose under the roof of the Abbey, England recognises no originality more illustrious, no heroism more patriotic, than his who led the campaign of humanity so long, and who achieved the abolition of the Slave Trade.

The model on which Wilberforce was formed still exists. The reader will find it in the book which we have sought to recommend; and if, in exploring that book, he finds thoughts to which no one yet has done justice, philanthropic suggestions which no one has yet carried out,

[1] Lord Brougham.

features of excellence which no one yet has exhibited, he will just repeat the experience of a thousand predecessors, and still will leave a virgin-field for the researches of all who follow.

The Book of Nature is not exhausted. Gutta-percha and chloroform, coal-gas and steam-carriages, sun-pictures and electric telegraphs, have all come to light within the last few years; and greater things than these are coming. All that is wanting is an explorer who distinctly understands what it is that he desires, and who will accept the answer when Nature flings it at his feet.

The Book of Revelation is not exhausted either. In our own day it has yielded treasures long latent; and we have seen such things come out of it as "The Astronomical Discourses," and "Elijah the Tishbite." Within the memory of some now living, it has yielded Sabbath Schools and Foreign Missions, Prison-visiting, Ragged Schools, and Convict-reformation. It has emancipated our slaves. It has ransomed from ignorance and bondage our factory children. It has sent Scripture-readers and Evangelists into all our towns. It has given our higher classes kinder and fairer feelings towards their less favoured brethren. And scantily as it is even yet admitted into the faith and affections of Christendom, it is the benevolence of the Bible which at this moment keeps its spirit from souring, and it is the "blessed hope" of the Bible which keeps its heart from breaking: just as the existence of that Bible is a pledge that its merciful Creator has in reserve for the world a long Sabbath of peace and righteousness.

Yet, like the good gifts which Nature retained in her bosom, till the sage discovered them and handed them forth to his fellows, all these great thoughts and good schemes were treasures hid in the Scripture, till Chalmers and Krummacher, Raikes and Sadler, Sarah Martin and Mrs. Fry, found them out and brought them forth. But the book is not exhausted; and if you really wish to serve your fellows, this Mentor will show you the way. With its guidance, you will find that the true "excelsior" is humility, and that, like Pascal, Edwards, and Vinet, the believer on his knees sees further than the philosopher on tiptoe. You will find that the book, which, among its affectionate exponents, has yielded characters so distinct, yet so excellent, as Arnold and Buxton, Howard and Williams, Martyn and M'Cheyne, can make you as superior to your present self, as these men were superior to ordinary mortals. In one word, you will find that in things intellectual, he is likely to be the mightiest master who knows the Bible best, and most meekly trusts in God; and in things moral and philanthropic,—in conduct and character,—he is likely to be the greatest original who is the closest copyist—the most implicit imitator of that Second Adam who is the great theme of the Bible Revelation.

CHAPTER X.

HINTS TO THE BIBLE STUDENT.

NEAR the Franconia Mountains in America there died a very aged man in August 1852. Shrewd, vigorous, and sturdy, he lived without God in the world, fourscore and four years,—a grasping, passionate, and domineering man, a thorough-going worldling. But the sudden death of an old acquaintance startled him. He felt that it was time for himself to get ready, and by an exertion, almost incredible, he learned to read the Testament. "Yes, it was hard work," as he said to a friend. "At my time of life to begin with the letters and learn to read, was hard work. Sometimes I could not make out the sense. But I would cry to the Almighty to help me, and then I would try again, and He would help me to find it out. So that, now, I have read the Testament through eight times, and here I am in the Epistles of Peter, the ninth time; and oh!" he added, with streaming eyes, "it is glory and praise in my heart." He was a sagacious and energetic old man, and, as he said himself, "I wanted a religion that should be good and strong, and that would keep by me, and help me when I came to die. So I cried to the Almighty, and He gave me a heart for the blessed Testa-

ment. I found out how to read it, and then I read in it that Jesus Christ made the world, and the rivers, and the mountains. And then I began to pray to Him, that He would give me a new heart; and He gave it to me. And I read, that when He lived on earth, He healed the sick and the blind, and was good to the poor; and then I knew that He would be kind to me; and He forgave me, and gave me a new heart." It was quite true. The change on his harsh and rugged nature was very wonderful; and as he said to the great American Statesman, who was his brother-in-law, "I have had done for me, Daniel, what neither you nor all the great men in the world could do for me; I have got a new heart." And, returning to his home, Mr. Webster said, "Wonderful things happen in this world, and one of them is, that John Colby has become a Christian."[1]

When the reader is prompted by such a powerful motive, the Bible is sure to be abundantly interesting, and it is hardly needful to give rules for its profitable perusal. But, if we do not mistake, most well-disposed persons wish that they carried to the Book a warmer enthusiasm, and sat down to it with a keener relish. They know its Divine Authority. They feel how solemn is its claim on their attention. They would not be happy to let days or weeks pass without a portion read. And yet they regret that their Bible-reading is so mechanical; that it is so often a tedium and a task-work; and altogether they feel guilty and uncomfortable at their treatment of the Word of God.

[1] See a recent tract of the American Tract Society.

We may assume that it is not for want of intrinsic interest or importance, that the Bible proves dull or distasteful to any reader. And for the sake of those who would like to enjoy it more, we would offer a few plain suggestions.

1. The very copy of the Bible which you use is a matter of some moment. A man of letters will read our English epic in the smallest size and sorriest type, rather than not read it at all; but if he possess the Bard of Paradise in a worthy garb,—if his edition be a learned luxury,—a delight for the eyes to look upon, he will be ready to return to it, and by casual peeps as well as stated perusals, he will be apt to grow mighty in Milton. So with the Jews, ancient and modern. Their transcripts of the Law are prodigies of penmanship, and apart from all other value, would be worth collecting as caligraphic wonders. In like manner, as one means of enhancing the value of the Book, would it not be well to get an attractive copy? an edition so fair and bright, that its very beauty would coax you to return, and, instead of straining your eyes over blurred and blotted columns, the clear and expressive type, like the recitation of an articulate speaker, would "give the sense, and cause you to understand the reading?"[1]

2. But in order to understand the meaning, you must take advantage of every help. There is a Geography of the Bible,—an Archæology of the Bible,—a Natural History of the Bible; and it is ignorance of these which makes many portions so insipid. For example, the Acts

[1] Nehemiah viii. 8.

of the Apostles read without a map, even if they convey some lessons to the heart, must remain a chaos in the memory. But if, instead of its starting-points and stations all merging in one another,—if instead of fancying Corinth and Colosse, both towns of Greece, and Antioch and Athens, adjacent villages,—if the route of the apostle resolve into geographical distinctness, it will not only be intensely interesting to follow him from place to place, and mark the successive stations where the gospel was planted; but it will materially enliven your perusal of the Epistles, when you think of the localities where the Roman, Corinthian, Philippian, and Thessalonian converts dwelt—the first-fruits of European heathendom; or when you call up the circumstances connected with the Galatian, Ephesian, and Colossian churches,—half Hebrew, half Hellenist. In like manner, some knowledge of Assyrian and Medo-Persian history is essential to a full command of the Old Testament prophecies; and not only are Amos and Obadiah new books when read among the forsaken rock-eyries of Petra, but Jonah, Nahum, and Habakkuk, and many portions of the larger prophets, are full of enigmas, the solutions of which have only lately been dug from under the earth-mounds of Mesopotamia. Even the knowledge of an Eastern custom is instant light on the corresponding fact or saying. When you see a Syrian flock following the shepherd, and answering to his call, you remember, "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me;" and when you see the herdsman bringing home to the village at the close of day, the oxen and asses, with which he was intrusted, and once he

is within the gate leaving them to themselves, for he knows that they will find their own way through the streets, and all seek their respective stables,—you understand Isaiah's words, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Were the climate, the seasons, and the husbandry of the Holy Land, carefully noted by some competent observer, they would throw fresh light on many a Scripture; and even the little which is known of its Natural History has dispelled many a difficulty. In the siege of Samaria, we are told that "an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver,"[1] and many have wondered why this last should be sold at all; but when we know that it is the bulbous root of the Star of Bethlehem[2] which got this name, and which was often used for food, the wonder ceases. People used to think the conies of Solomon the same as our rabbits, which are indeed "a feeble folk," but which do not "make their houses in the rock." Now that the cony is ascertained to be the Daman or Hyrax,[3]—a shy defenceless creature, which lurks among the cliffs of the mountains, and darts into its den at the least approach of danger, the words of Agur acquire their full significance. When Solomon says, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which, having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer and gathereth her food in the harvest," there can be little doubt that he ascribes a hoarding forethought

[1] 2 Kings vi. 2, 5.
[2] *Ornithogalum umbellatum.*
[3] *Hyrax Syriacus.*

to the ant. But as no European species is known to lay up stores, it has been usual to understand the passage as an accommodation to a popular impression. It may be so; but in Asia there is at least one store-gathering species. "In June 1829," says Colonel Sykes, "in my morning walk, I observed more than a score of little heaps of grass seeds (Panicum) in several places, on uncultivated land near the parade-ground [at Poonah]; each heap contained about a handful. On examination, I found they were raised by a species of ant [*Atta providens*], hundreds of which were employed in bringing up the seeds to the surface, from a store below: the grain had probably got wet at the setting in of the monsoon, and the ants had taken advantage of the first sunny day to bring it up to dry. The store must have been laid up from the time of the ripening of the grass seeds in January and February."[1]

3. This leads us to mention another Bible-help which we think you will find very valuable. Would it not be good for every one to keep for himself a little storehouse of Bible illustration? Every book that elucidates Scripture is useful; but to each person the most serviceable of all commentaries would be one of his own compiling. Were any one to get an interleaved Bible, or still better, perhaps, a blank-paper book; and whenever, in reading a theological treatise, or a work of Eastern travel, or in listening to a sermon, he found a dark saying expounded, or a trite saying happily applied, he treasured it up; his casket would soon fill with pearls of great price. Even

[1] *Entomological Transactions,* vol. i. p. 103.

although, as is usually the fate of such experiments,—even although the record were imperfectly kept up, its value would be unspeakable. Every text thus illustrated becomes in its turn an illustration; not only an enlightened surface, but a luminous source,—a torch to a hundred parallels,—a candle to all the context. And although you never made more than a few dozen entries in such a book, they would shed more meaning over the Bible than days of careless and cursory perusal; and when you had nearly forgotten all other books and sermons, the biographical incidents, the theological elucidations, the illustrative maxims and memorabilia, which you had thus garnered up, would survive, as interesting and instructive as ever.

4. The Bible, as we have already had occasion to mention, is, in one aspect, a book, and in another aspect, a library. It has both unity and variety. It is all alike the Word of God, and yet it is really made up of six-and-sixty volumes. The bouquet is composed of many flowers, but all of them gathered in the conservatory of Heaven. The bundle contains many spices,—aloes, myrrh, and cassia, as well as mint and cumin,—proverbs as well as gospels, chronicles as well as psalms,—some of them more exquisite, and some of them more homely, but all of them from God; and all of them, in their collectiveness, profitable for doctrine or reproof, for correction or instruction, and combining to furnish for every good work the man of God. And where there is such diversity, there will be corresponding affinities; and without any disparagement to the rest, every reader will find a prevailing attraction to some

given portion. The poet is the inheritor of nature. He enjoys it all, and he despises none of it; but there is some form or presentation in which he specially delights. Crabbe loved the low sandy flats of the Suffolk coast, and Wordsworth the hills of Cumberland. Davy forgot philosophy and became a little child among granite peaks, which spoke of his native Penzance; and Scott declared that he should die if he did not once a year inhale the heather. Each had his turn, and for every taste the Creator had provided a counterpart. And so the believer inherits the Bible. The record of his Father's love is all his own. But though it is the same God who gives it all, and though it is the same Saviour whom it all reveals, there are diversities of taste; and to meet these tastes, there are diversities of adaptations. Leighton basks in the warm evening sunshine of Peter, and Luther grows electric with the yearning affection and evangelistic ardour of Paul. With the Sermon on the Mount and the hortatory epistles for their topic, the English Reformers sought to foster in their hearers a practical piety; whilst, coeval with the Ridleys and Latimers, the Donns and the Hammonds of England, the North gave birth to men like Knox, and Melville, and Bruce,—men who took their cue from the old Hebrew prophets, and their text from the Kings or the Judges,—a lion-bearding, image-breaking race, full of their own sublime purpose, which, out of a race of swordsmen and robbers, sought to make a covenanted nation,—and in carrying that purpose as fearless of man as they were faithful to their God. And so, it is not only possible, but we might almost say desirable, that each

Bible-book had its own student,—one who found in it a special pleasure, and who round it as a nucleus aggregated materials from the rest. But it is still more needful alongside of any partial study like this, to secure a comprehensive knowledge of the Scriptures complete. No single book can make a Bible, just as no one truth can make a full revelation. It is, therefore, by comparing scripture with scripture,—by reading Hebrews in the light of Leviticus,—by supplementing Matthew's parables with John's conversations,—by comparing the justifying righteousness of Romans with the justifying faith of Galatians, and both together with the faith-justifying works of James, that our creed will attain symmetry and system, and like an arch, which is not all pier or all key-stone, but which consists of many courses fitly framed together, our faith—self-consistent and self-sustaining—will not readily break down. The gospel,—the great faithful saying, is the key-stone; but on that grand central truth,—the Cross of Christ, God Manifest, Love Incarnate, the Mediator at once human and Divine—on that great key-stone, from where Genesis opens to where the Apocalypse closes, every successive instalment has a purchase and puts forth a strengthening pressure. And if it add to your intelligence to know the special purport of every Bible-book; if it be creditable and scholar-like to be able to tell, off-hand, how Second Samuel relates the reign of David, and how Second John is an apostolic counsel to a Christian Lady; you will only attain a thorough Bible mastery, you will then only be mighty in the Scriptures, when you know their respective contributions to the cardinal Revelation, and can point out

that testimony concerning Jesus, which is the essence of them all.[1]

5. Those who are acquainted with Greek or Hebrew will naturally take the opportunity of reading the Scriptures in their original languages. In that case, they will find no doctrine nor important fact with which our authorized version has not already brought them acquainted; but they may find many expressions, which, in the original, acquire new force or felicity. But a chief advantage of reading the Greek, or the Hebrew, is, that it keeps the mind alert, and necessitates a closer marking of words and phrases, than when running over the well-known verses of our English Bible. For the same reason you will often find it of service to read a foreign translation. In Luther's or De Wette's German Bible, in the French of Martini or De Sacy, in the Italian of Diodati, or the Dutch of the States-General or of Van der Palm, the occasional discrepancies and the curious idioms will keep your attention awake; and, like a gem in a fresh setting, like a picture in a new frame, you will be at once sur-

[1] Every book of the Bible has its own "burden." It makes its specific addition to the aggregate Revelation. The reader could address himself to no more profitable inquiry than to ascertain the principal subjects and prevailing purport of each book,—in some cases, of each chapter or section; and it would be a material aid to his understanding and memory if he could condense the result into a brief "running title." In the German Psalters, quaint and suggestive names are given to some of the Psalms. For instance, the 101st is "David's Regentenspiegel"—"David's Mirror for Magistrates;" the 119th, "Der Christen goldenes A B C," etc., "The Christian's Golden Alphabet." Thomas Brooke calls the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, "that little Book of Martyrs;" and "Sacred Idylls," is the name which Dr. Good has given to his version of Solomon's Song. The reader will have no difficulty in finding out "King David's Pastoral," and Messiah's "Epinikion, or Carmen triumphale;" but every one may not have noticed that the New Testament contains two Epistles to the Ephesians and two to the Hebrews.

prised and delighted by the novel aspect of familiar ideas. Or, as an edifying recreation, why might not a few friends compare, stanza by stanza, the Psalms, as they have been rendered by Watts, and Merrick, and Keble, and by the Scotch and English versionists; or, as they have been done into Latin measure by Johnstone and Buchanan? Or, why might they not go over, verse by verse, a chapter of a Gospel, or of an Epistle, as given by Wiclif and Tyndale, and our other early translators,[1] noting, as they proceed, any seeming diversities or any peculiar and emphatic expressions?

6. In family worship it is usually best to read some book or the entire Bible right through, chapter by chapter; but in his private study, every reader must adopt the plan which suits his turn of mind and his circumstances. A man of leisure may allot a large portion for his daily perusal; and in his progress from book to book, he may avail himself of the commentator or critic who has done the most to expound it. And a man of little leisure, like the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain, may be glad to snatch for his morning meal, a promise or a proverb,—the verse of a Psalm, or a sentence from a Gospel. But even the busiest man will find occasional opportunities for more extensive reading; and on some quiet evening, or in the seclusion of the Sabbath, you could not do better than sit down to the Bible, as you would to a theological treatise or a volume of Christian biography, with your mind made

[1] For this, every facility is afforded in Bagster's *English Hexapla*,—a work containing the English New Testament of Wiclif, Tyndale, and Cranmer, and the Genevan, Anglo-Rhemish, and Authorized Versions.

up to a deliberate and straightforward perusal. With this view you may select the history of Joseph or Samson, of David or Solomon; the Journeys of the Israelites; the Missionary Excursions of St. Paul; or you may resolve to master a century of Hebrew History, connecting with the recorded events the contemporary prophecies: or you may determine to read right through a Gospel Narrative, or the whole writings of some apostle, James, John, or Peter. And just as you find the charms of continuity and completeness enhance all the other attractions of an ordinary book,—so, in perfect harmony with devout and reverential feelings, will the course of the narrative, the development of the leading idea, the progress of the argument, enlist your interest and quicken your perceptive powers. Indeed, there are many of the inspired writings with which it is hardly fair to deal otherwise. To take the analogous case,—when you have only a minute to spare, you may run your eye over a Hymn of Cowper, or a "Thought" of Pascal, and at once glean something memorable; but you would hardly think it justice to a Sermon of Horsley, or a Biography of Walton, or a Drama of Racine, to read it at the rate of two pages a day; yet this is the treatment usually given to the kindred compositions contained in the Sacred Volume. No doubt, to keep pace with readers who "run," it has "words upon wheels;" and a Psalm, or a single apostolic exhortation, may supply to the man most hard-pressed and hurried, material for the day's meditation; and we cannot be sufficiently thankful for such terse and portable sayings. But connected prophecies and lengthened narratives lose much

of their impressiveness when split into isolated sections; and, to say nothing of the every-day error which quotes the reasonings of Bildad and Zophar, as if they were no less authoritative than the Divine Arbiter's own deliverance—dissevered from that final deliverance, a drama, like Job, loses half its significance and all its unity. Read in this fragmentary fashion, the Epistle to the Hebrews has failed to disclose to many a Protestant the true theory of Christian Sacerdotalism, and the Epistle to the Romans is obscure on the method of justification. And, forbearing reference to the most sacred of all Biographies, were the reader trying the experiment on himself, he might possibly find that the journeys of Paul the apostle have not left on his mind an impression so lucid as the career of Whitefield or Eliot, and that his outline of Hebrew History is a sad contrast to his knowledge of his own country's annals. And yet, he has read the sacred records ten times as often as any uninspired historian. But—which sufficiently accounts for the difference—the modern author was eagerly resumed night after night, till the perusal was ended: Samuel and Luke were meted out in daily tasks, and never read except in small disjointed fragments.

7. Like other books, the charm of the Bible will very much depend on the frame of mind in which it is studied. To an earnest reader, it will always be interesting; to a docile reader, it will always be new and surprising. If you intend to visit the lands where gold is gathered, you will peruse with avidity the publications which describe them, and which tell you what equipments to provide. Or if you are fond of some science, you will spend half

the night devouring a treatise which expounds its principles, and you will feel richly rewarded in your fresh information or your new intellectual mastery. So was it with John Colby. As soon as he learned to desire a better country, "God gave him a heart for the blessed Testament;" and nearly all the waking hours of his remaining three years were devoted to its study. If we, too, want "a religion good and strong, that will keep by us and help us when we come to die;" if conformity to God's will be the science on which we are most intent; we shall need no inducement more powerful to draw us back to these Scriptures ever and anon. To an honest heart they never lack the zest of novelty; nor so long as the mind is wakeful will there ever be an end of their wonders. When the Jews returned from Babylon, and were somewhat settled in their ancient city, the occasion was signalized by a great Scripture-reading. Assembling early, and commencing with prayer, the Governor and the Ministers occupying a platform in the midst, whilst a vast congregation thronged the square, one voice relieved another, till the sobs and bitter cries of the audience interrupted the speakers. The tale of God's mercies; the recital of His good commandments, and the whole history of their nation's provocations and perversity, had broken the heart of the people; and though the rulers succeeded in stilling their lamentations, no time was lost in carrying out one practical conclusion. "They found written in the law, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month. So the people went forth and brought olive branches, and pine branches, and

myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of shady trees, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the House of God, and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua, unto that day, had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness." The perusal of the law had pointed out a neglected duty; the heart of the people was soft; it was the very season when the feast should be kept; no time was lost: but as the people prepared themselves hastily to keep the commandment, so Jehovah blessed with His immediate smile,—"a great gladness,"—the nation's new obedience. An enchanted scene it was in that clear autumn weather: every street arched over with its verdant trellis, and every flat roof a fragrant bower; Jerusalem suddenly converted into a forest, and its new temple a mount waving with shrubbery and blazing with flowers: whilst, sweeter than the breath of the myrtle, rose the incense of praise and the swell of a sanctified patriotism. It was a week of waking blessedness,—as if a segment of the heavenly Sabbath had dropped into the days of earth, and people wondered at their happiness. Yet, after all, they were only carrying out a command which had for ages existed in the Word of God; with the existence of which some of them were doubtless acquainted long ago; but which, had it not been for the propitious mood of that moment, might have remained a dead letter till Jerusalem was a second time destroyed. And even so, there may be both doctrines and duties still latent in Scripture, whose discovery only

awaits our more docile perusal. And, like the Jews at the revival of the Feast of Tabernacles, when we comply with the neglected command, or credit the faithful saying, we shall experience "a great gladness,"—the joy which has already rewarded more teachable scholars, and which, with more candour, would sooner have greeted ourselves.

Finally, prayer is a sure means of rendering the Word read both pleasant and profitable. There is a certain congeniality of mind essential to the enjoyment and right understanding of any book. A man of scientific exactitude will soon weary of a work of fancy, and a poet will soon lay aside a work of tame technicalities. And, looking to their external style, there are few minds so universal as to appreciate equally every sacred composition, historical, poetical, argumentative, didactic; and there has been much wresting of Scripture from forgetting this obvious distinction. Frigid critics have applied their micrometers to the imagery of Isaiah, and have subjected to logical severity the metaphors of Job; just as some over-heated fancies have seen no end of mysteries in the books of Esther and Ezra. Happy is it for a Bible-book when it finds a like-minded interpreter,—when a poet like Horne expatiates on the Psalms, and when a logician like Haldane expounds the Romans. But, apart from this outward form,—this human style,—historical, didactic, logical, poetic,—there is in it an inner, all-pervading style,—so to speak, God's own style,—a style of thought which is neither Hebrew nor Hellenistic—nay, nor even Human,—but aloof from all, and above them all,—a Heavenly style,—a tone of sanctity and benevolence and majesty, which

makes this book as superhuman as it is all-adapted and all-blessing. To appreciate this,—to enter into this, the Divine mode of thinking and feeling,—it does not need that we become poets, reasoners, and sages;—it does need, however, that we become worshippers. No man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man that is in him; even so, no one knoweth the things of God, save the Spirit of God; and to give us sympathy with God's own mind, to enable us to credit such love as is the love of God, and to give us relish for such holiness as is the very essence of the Godhead, as well as to make us cheerfully bow to the authority of the Great Speaker, we need to be taught by the Holy Spirit. That Spirit is promised to prayer. God will give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. And if, like John Colby, we cry to the Almighty, He will give us a heart for the blessed Testament. If, like Ezra and his audience, our reading of the Law is prefaced by prayer, it will be followed by repentance and reform. If, like David, we exclaim, "Open Thou mine eyes," we shall see wonders in God's Word. If, with Paul, we bow the knee to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, He will strengthen us by His Spirit in the inner man, and Christ believed will dwell in our hearts, and we shall be enabled, through the faith of love, to apprehend somewhat of that love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

EMBLEMS FROM EDEN.

THE TREE OF LIFE.

WAKING up to conscious existence in the midst of a garden, it would seem as if man had not entirely forgotten the wonderful vision on which his eyes then opened. At least, there is no passion more general than the admiration of beautiful flowers. They kindle the rapture of infancy, and it is touching to see how over the first king-cups or daisies its tiny hand closes more eagerly than hereafter it will grasp silver coins or golden. The solitary blossom lights a lamp of quiet gladness in the poor man's chamber, and in the palace of the prince the marble of Canova and the canvas of Raffaele are dimmed by the lordly exotic with its calyx of flame or its petals of snow. With these companions of our departed innocence we plait the bridal wreath, and, scattered on the coffin, or planted on the grave, there seems a hope of resurrection in their smile, a sympathy in their gentle decay. And whilst to the dullest gaze they speak a lively oracle, in their empyrean bloom and unearthly fragrance the pensive fancy recognises some mysterious memory, and asks—

"Have we been all at fault? Are we the sons
Of pilgrim sires who left their lovelier land?
And do we call inhospitable climes
By names they brought from home?"

But in the midst of that primeval Garden the eye was arrested by two objects, of which the counterpart cannot now be found in the field or the forest. One of these was 'the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil,"—regarding which God said, "Thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." The other was "the Tree of Life," which possessed a supernatural virtue. To eat of it was to live for ever. Its fruit was the antidote of death and the means of sustaining man in his original immortality.

The Tree of Knowledge was a test of obedience. Any act of transgression would have forfeited man's tenure of Paradise; but in making a covenant with Adam God was pleased to select one special form of abstinence as the criterion of his self-denial and his loyalty. Around this Tree, so "good for food" and so "pleasant to the eyes," the Supreme Lawgiver reared a fence, and saying, "Thou shalt not eat of it," He concentred man's attention on a single point, and, so to speak, reduced his trial to a single issue. But the subtilty of Satan and the attractions of the forbidden tree proved too strong for man's loyalty. He took the tempting fruit. He ate, and was undone.

The Tree of Life was a token of the Creator's preserving care and a memento of the creature's dependence. What it was like we do not know, but it possessed a marvellous

efficacy. As long as man ate of it he could not die: and it has been ingeniously suggested that the protracted lives of the antediluvians were owing to the power of this Paradisaic antidote lingering for ages in the human constitution. But however this may be, the Tree was a type of the one Great Source of Immortality. It taught the creature that he was not his own preserver. It reminded him that the "Fountain of Life" was external to himself, and that the only security for his own life's prolongation was the constant command of this soul-gladdening and life-confirming sustenance. And most likely every time that he partook of it he was conscious of an intenser immortality. Possibly the consummation of each day's lightsome labour, and coincident with those visits of his Heavenly Father which made so welcome the cool of the day, we can imagine him resorting to the spot where stood the sacramental symbol,—its very continuance a sign that on either side the covenant continued still inviolate,—devoutly stretching forth his hand to the laden bough, and whilst he and his partner ate the mystic fruit, which filled all their being with celestial joy and raised them nearer to the angels, overhearing from above the voice of God, answering with their evening hymn, and then sinking into hallowed slumber beneath the sacred shadow.

After man's transgression the Tree of Life ceased to be accessible. Lest, in his desperation, man should rush to it, and by its mistimed use entail on himself immortal misery, God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, and with a flaming sword and cherub-sentinels guarded every avenue. And now the gates of the primeval Paradise

are closed. That short dispensation is ended. That covenant is broken beyond all possibility of reparation; and in this world there is no longer any innocent creature to whom God can say what he said to Adam, "Do this and live."

But there is still a Tree of Life. Instead of abandoning our guilty race to self-entailed destruction, in His unspeakable mercy God has interposed, and in the mission and atonement of His own dear Son has provided a salvation for sinners of mankind. And throughout the inspired records, the Saviour and His work are repeatedly introduced under the veil of this most ancient emblem.

In Ezekiel's vision of the Temple Waters we are told, that on the bank of the river "shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof fail: every month they shall bring forth fruit afresh: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine:" a passage predicting that great outburst of Gospel blessing with which the Church of Christ is yet to surprise herself and renovate the world, and which connects itself so obviously with John's vision of the New Jerusalem: "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the Tree of Life, which bare twelve fruits, and yielded its fruit every month: and the leaves of the Tree were for the healing of the nations:" or, as it has been rendered in the pleasant rhyme of that forgotten bard who long since sang "Jerusalem, my happy home:"—

"Thy gardens and thy gallant walks
Continually are green;
There grow such sweet and pleasant flowers
As nowhere else are seen.

Quite through the streets, with silver sound,
The flood of life doth flow;
Upon whose banks on every side
The trees of life do grow.

These trees each month do yield their fruit,
For evermore they spring;
And all the nations of the world
To thee their honours bring."

So profuse is the immortality, and so universally accessible are the blessings of this happy region, that either prophet speaks in these passages as if the trees of life were many: just as elsewhere, with allusion to His manifold operations and offices, the one great Comforter is called "the Seven Spirits of God." Elsewhere, however, where precision and personality are required, the primitive unity reappears; and in the promise to the faithful of Ephesus we read, "To him that overcometh will I grant to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God,"—repeated and extended in the last page of the canon, "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

In our present contemplation of this celestial Tree we shall restrict ourselves to its health-restoring and life-sustaining efficacy.

The pre-requisite to all enjoyment is health. You are sick, and your little sister brings in a snowdrop from the garden, or a sprig of verbena from the conservatory, and

you take it with a languid smile, and lay it beside your pillow, and hardly look at it again. And your brother comes in and shows you a splendid present which has just been sent you, or he opens a letter and announces that the lawsuit is gained, and that you are heir to a noble property: but the pain just then is exquisite, and in this intensity of torture there is nothing you desire but deliverance from anguish. Or in the adjoining chamber a charming melody is played; but you beg them to leave off, for the noise is driving you distracted.

And so, spiritually, there is no health in us; but the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. Desire has failed. The soul of man takes no interest in the objects which once stirred it with liveliest emotion; but whether it be in the dull discomfort of habitual ungodliness, or in the acuter paroxysms of sinful passion and guilty remorse, those objects which fill a holy universe with delight are the objects of the sinner's aversion or contempt. And were you saying to him, "Here is a pearl of great price which your Elder Brother has sent you from the far country: this is a letter announcing that our Advocate has gained the case, and secured for the members of this family the fair inheritance of Heaven," he would only listen with languid curiosity; and were you inviting him to take part in any of those holy recreations which form the pastime of spirits pure and healthy: "Listen to this description of God's love. Let us sing together this psalm of thanksgiving," the invitation would only vex him.

But Christ is the cure of sin. His atonement pacifies the conscience; His Spirit purifies the heart; His person,

—the life He led, and the words He spake,—give new and endearing views of God. And just as in the days of His earthly sojourn, to go to Him was to be cured of what disease soever any man had, so now that He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, it is to bestow repentance and remission of sins; and if you go to Him, whatever be your nature's malady, He will make you whole. If covered with sin's leprosy, and ashamed to carry into a Presence so pure defilement so repulsive, moved with compassion He will say, "I will: be thou clean," and that word of kind omnipotence will make you a new creature. If prostrate in sin's fever,—if tossed with passion, and delirious with wild desire,—He will take you by the hand and raise you up, and, restored and tranquillized, you will be able to minister to the Master. If sick of the palsy,—if bereft of spiritual power, and shut up in the shaking sepulchre of a dreary and disconsolate existence, trembling for the future, but unable to improve the present,—He will say, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee," and like him, who, strong in the infusion of a celestial happiness, "took up his bed" and departed to his house, the Saviour's pardoning word will fill you with immortal youth, and send you on your way rejoicing.

Alexander the Great was dying of a wound which did not seem very dangerous at first, but it baffled his physicians, and was rapidly becoming mortal. One night, however, he dreamed that some one had brought him a peculiar-looking plant, which, when applied to the festering sore, had cleansed and closed it. In the morning when he awoke, he described the plant, and the historian says, that

being sought for, it was found and applied, and the fiery wound was healed. Now, dear reader, your soul has got a deadly hurt. It has been bitten by that old serpent, the devil; and although the injury may not look alarming at the first, sin has got into the system, and left to yourself you will never recover. The wound gets worse. Your very efforts to heal it only exasperate it more and more. You have broken the Sabbath; you have taken God's name in vain; you have been overtaken with strong drink, you have been guilty of some deed, harsh, cruel, dishonest; or you have spoken some word malignant, impious, or untrue;—something has occurred which stounding through your conscience, calls attention to the neglected stab in your nature. And you try to heal it. You lay some flattering unction on the sore. You promise to yourself and to God that you will never do the like again. You form earnest purposes, and you sketch out excellent schemes of daily conduct. You bind yourself to a daily task of Bible-reading; you go regularly to church; perhaps in the hope of a decisive benefit, you even force yourself forward to the communion. But nothing comes of it. The damage is too deep. Ungodliness,—the virus that kills the soul,—has got into the blood; it bounds in every rebellious pulse; it breathes in every selfish prayer, it converts into a worse disease each self-righteous palliative; and though for a season your conscience may be soothed, the wound is still deadly, your nature is still unrenewed.

But despised and rejected of men, there is a tender plant known to God, and revealed in the Gospel, which is able to heal you. It is the Balm of Gilead,—the finished

work of Immanuel, the substitution in the sinner's stead, and the satisfaction rendered to Divine justice by God's beloved Son. In order to obtain its healing essence, they used to wound the Balsam Tree; and so for our transgressions the Saviour was wounded. In order to give forth in one crowning and conclusive act the merit of His life, He was obedient unto death, and He made His soul an offering for sin. In the fires of Gethsemane "the green tree" burned, and was not consumed; but in that hour of hot indignation, when His sweat was as great drops of blood falling to the ground, the first drops of this heavenly balm exuded, and when on Calvary His blessed side was pierced, the full current followed. The blood then poured forth, meeting as it did the great maxim in Heaven's jurisprudence, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission," and bringing to a climax the vicarious sufferings of the Divine Redeemer, is often spoken of as if it had been the entire price which purchased redemption, and is constantly employed as an affecting synonyme for Immanuel's atoning sacrifice. "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." "Ye are redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, as of a lamb without blemish." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

With its peace-speaking, soul-cleansing efficacy, this precious blood is the balm which God has provided to restore soundness to the sin-stricken nature. Most usually in the vehicle of some "faithful saying," the Holy Spirit takes the truth concerning Jesus and applies it to the understanding and the heart. In some thoughtful or

anxious moment He sheds a new and endearing light on the sacrifice and intercession of the Saviour; and, whilst surveying the great appointed Antidote, love, thankfulness, and praise, steal into the mind of the beholder. The aspect of the Godhead is altered; and surrendering to the grace of the Gospel, the rebel is subdued into a penitent, and the penitent is surprised into the gratitude and new obedience of the prodigal restored.

As a North-American Indian once described it to an audience in London: "You know we Indians are great deer-hunters, and when we shoot the deer he runs away as if he was not hurt; but when he gets to the hill, he feels the pain, and he lies down on that side where the pain is most severe. Then he feels the pain on the other side, and turns over; and so he wanders about till he perishes. After I learned to pray, that pain in my heart became more severe. I could not sleep. Like the wounded deer I turned from side to side, and could not rest. At last I got up at one or two o'clock at night, and walked about my room. I made another effort in prayer, and said, 'O Jesus, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me;' and before the break of day, I found that my heavy heart was taken away. I felt happy. I felt the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. I found Jesus indeed sweet to my soul."

A hundred years ago, there was a vigorous-minded man and an able scholar, the rector of Wintringham in Lincolnshire. Entering the ministry without love to God or to the souls of men, for years he spent his professional income on self-indulgence; and whilst the pastor amused

himself, the people perished. At last his conscience was awakened, and as his conduct grew correct, his preaching became earnest and arousing. Still he was ignorant of "Christ crucified," and as his was not the ministry of reconciliation no effect followed his solemn exhortations. He was vexed at the epistle to the Romans: for, hard as he found it to attain a life of superior sanctity, St. Paul seemed to make no account of human goodness however eminent; and although he read Grotius and Hammond, they did not resolve his difficulties. But being a man of strong native sense, he could not rest in this uncertainty. Accordingly, one day he "spread the matter before the Lord," and entreated Him to pity his distress, and guide him by His Holy Spirit into the understanding of the truth. Then taking up his Greek Testament, he read carefully over the first six chapters of the Romans. To his unspeakable astonishment his difficulties disappeared. The righteousness of God was revealed to him. He saw that justification through Jesus Christ alone is the great burden of the Gospel, the grand display of God's perfections, and the only principle of genuine holiness. He rejoiced with exceeding joy. "His conscience was purged from guilt through the atoning blood of Christ, and his heart set at liberty to run the way of God's commandments, in a spirit of filial love and holy delight; and from that hour Mr. Adam began to preach salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone, to man by nature and practice lost, condemned under the law, and, as his own expression is, 'Always a sinner.'"

But if the balsam of this immortal Tree is renovation

to the soul, there is in its very leaves a sanatory virtue. They are "medicine." They are "for the healing of the nations." The sayings of Jesus, and the silent charm of His recorded actions, are an influence doing good in the world every day; and no one can come beneath the Tree of Life but straightway his mind is better. Is he carking and care-worn, afraid lest his supplies be cut off, and he be left without a competency? Then at his feet he gathers a leaf inscribed, "Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and take no thought for the morrow." Is he lonely? mourning friends estranged or buried? Then amidst a musical whisper overhead there falls flickering into his bosom a leaf which says, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Is he vexed and angry? fuming at some offence, vowing vengeance for some indignity? Then, like a rose-petal, soft and fragrant, there glides down some memorial of Calvary, or the fifth petition in a well-remembered prayer; and as it lies upon his heart so calm, his angry spirit cools, and he gets grace to cry, "Father, forgive." For Christ's name's sake Mr. Simeon was at one time an object of much scorn and contempt in the University of Cambridge; and it was very trying to be a man so marked, that no one would like to be recognised by him or seen walking with him. One day as he strolled along, weary with continual reproach and buffeting, he prayed that God would send him some cordial in His

Word; and opening his little Testament, the first sentence on which his eye alighted was, "They found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; him they compelled to bear his cross." Relating the incident, he added, "You know Simon is the same name as Simeon; and when I read *that*, I said, Lord, lay it on me, lay it on me! I will gladly bear the cross for Thy sake. And I thenceforth bound persecution as a wreath of glory round my brow." That was a leaf from the Tree; and as in the instance of that opportune text, it has often happened that the mourner in Zion has come into the sanctuary with some matter too hard for him, or with some thorn in the flesh or some wound in his spirit he has sat down to read or to meditate, and, like the leaf brought into the anxious ark by Noah's dove, some faithful saying brought home by the Comforter, has turned fear into hope, and languor into life, and sent him on his way rejoicing.

Nor is it only to the individual believer that these leaves bring healing. At this moment numbers of them are blown about the world; and although drifted to and fro, soiled, withered, and far distant from the Tree, even in their promiscuous flight they have helped to heal the nations. They banished the gladiatorial games of old Rome, and cured the abominations of classic Paganism. In modern Europe they have extinguished slavery, and around person and property they have thrown a sanction and securities formerly unknown. Even now they mitigate the enormities of war, and with the Sabbath and many softening influences coming in betwixt Mammon and the toiling million, they win an occasional respite for

the bleared eyes and blistered hands of Industry. And even when crushed beneath the careless foot, or draggled in the way-side mire, they still emit their heavenly fragrance; and although they may be only quoted to adorn an idle speech or tale, no tongue can tell how much the Saviour's holy words are doing to soften the heart of Humanity and purify the air of Time.

But if the leaf of this Tree is for medicine, its fruit is for food to the nations of the saved. The person of Immanuel is the great storehouse of the Church's strength and happiness; and it is by apprehending His character and availing ourselves of His kindness that we are to grow in hope towards God and in personal holiness. For although the Tree of Life is now transplanted to the midst of the Upper Paradise, His branches stretch to "this lower ground:" the blessings which He purchased are brought nigh, even to the hand and mouth of sinners here on earth. And as the fruits of this Tree are yielded in twelvefold succession, there need not be a month in any year, nor a day in any week, in which the soul does not enjoy the tranquillizing, invigorating, and sanctifying results of communion with the Saviour.

In Eastern poetry they tell of a wondrous tree, on which grew golden apples and silver bells; and every time the breeze went by and tossed the fragrant branches, a shower of these golden apples fell, and the living bells, they chimed and tinkled forth their airy ravishment. On the Gospel Tree there grow melodious blossoms; sweeter bells than those which mingled with the pomegranates on Aaron's vest; holy feelings, heaven-taught joys; and

when the wind blowing where he listeth, the south-wind waking,—when the Holy Spirit breathes upon that soul, there is the shaking down of mellow fruits, and the flow of healthy odours all around, and the gush of sweetest music, whose gentle tones and joyful echoings are wafted through all recesses of the soul. Not easily explained to others, and too ethereal to define, these joys are on that account but the more delightful. The sweet sense of forgiveness; the conscious exercise of all the devout affections, and grateful and adoring emotions Godward; the lull of sinful passions, itself ecstatic music; an exulting sense of the security of the well-ordered covenant; the gladness of surety-righteousness, and the kind Spirit of adoption encouraging you to say, "Abba, Father;" all the delightful feelings which the Spirit of God increases or creates, and which are summed up in that comprehensive word,—"joy in the Holy Ghost."

Such was the happy case of Dr. Doddridge when he wrote as follows to an absent friend:—"My days begin, pass, and end in pleasure, and seem short because they are so delightful. I have more of the presence of God than I ever remember. He enables me to live for Him, and to live with Him. When I awake in the morning I address myself to Him, and converse with Him; and He meets me in my study, in secret and family devotion. It is pleasant to read, pleasant to compose, pleasant to converse with my friends at home, pleasant to visit the sick, the poor; pleasant to write letters of necessary business by which any good can be done, and pleasant to preach the Gospel to poor souls; pleasant in the week to think

how near another Sabbath is, and oh! how much more pleasant to think how near eternity is, and that it is but a step from Earth to Heaven."

Were such a state of mind continuous, the beatified existence would become a Heaven on Earth; and the only reason why it is not continuous is, that we wander away from the Tree of Life; we forget what Jesus is, or cease to avail ourselves of His intercession. Accepted in the Beloved, and, whatsoever we do, doing it in the name of Christ Jesus, "our days would begin, pass, and end in pleasure."

"My Beloved," says the Church, "is as the apple-tree. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." Intimacy with the Saviour is happiness, and from that adoring and affectionate communion there should be seen to arise a decisive effect on the temper and conduct.

1. For instance, confidence in God. No man hath seen God, but the only-begotten Son had a most intimate knowledge of the perfections of the Most High; and that knowledge filled Him with ineffable complacency. It was His happiness to know that the throne of the universe is occupied by spotless rectitude, boundless benevolence, and infallible wisdom; and in holding communion with God, He held communion with the holiest of happy beings, and the happiest of the holy, and this infinitely holy and happy being His own Father in heaven. Jesus Christ had perfect confidence in God. In all His doings He rejoiced, and in all His requirements He cheerfully acquiesced, evermore saying, "Father, I thank Thee: Father, Thy will be done;" and undisturbed by one opposing

wish, undeflected by one antagonist interest, the mind that was in Christ, and the mind that is in God, were in constant unison. The will of God and the life of Jesus made one music:—the Pattern-Man and the manifested Jehovah, and so a perfect Mediation:—Heaven enshrined in Humanity, and Humanity enfolded in the bosom of infinite Love.

And whosoever will in meekness sit at Christ's feet will soon learn right views of God's character. The representation of God's disposition, so forgiving, so compassionate, so fatherly, which He so often gave in His parables and discourses; which was illustrated in His own beneficent career, and at last crowned by His peerless sacrifice;—when a thoughtful eye has fixed upon it and a candid spirit owned its truth, it works a marvellous transformation. Strange prejudices vanish,—prejudices old as memory and deep as sin; and in the society of One whom God hails as His beloved Son, and whom the sinner learns to recognise as His own Divine and adorable Brother, views of the unseen Jehovah break in upon the mind akin to those which inspired and irradiated the Saviour Himself: until in the Maker of worlds the spirit finds its truest Father, its kindest and most intimate Friend: until that great and inevitable Being whom the guilty conscience eyed askance as the frowning Spectator of all its actions, and the incubus on all its merriment, becomes the brightness of the present and the hope of the future, the strength of the heart and its portion for ever.

2. An endeared command. To a worldly man the commands of God are briers and thorns. They wound him in

his attempt to reach his sinful pleasures, and perhaps he flies into a rage, and kicks against the pricks,—piercing himself through with many sorrows. But just as the naturalist tells us that spines are abortive buds, and that if they had been allowed to develop fully, they might have adorned the tree with fragrant blossoms and fair fruits,—so the precepts, which on the dry trunk of Pharisaism stand out as mere prickly prohibitions, expand on the Tree of Life and become equivalent to great and precious promises. Requirements so exceeding broad as the love of God with all the soul,—so very deep as holiness of heart and purity of thought,—so strangely high as good-will to enemies and the repayment of cruelty with kindness;—commands, which to the man trying to earn his own heaven, are only an interruption and a provocation; to the believer in Jesus are "the mark of a high calling," —the index of the rank to which he himself is yet to rise, —the pledge of eventual perfect holiness. As found on the Tree of Life the thorn has developed into a pleasant fruit, and fraught with his Saviour's love and fragrant with good things to come, the disciple finds it sweet to his taste.

3. Self-denial. Said our Lord, "If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross, and deny himself, and follow me." The fruit of the Tree of Life is tonic and invigorating, and nowhere is self-denial so easy as in the society of the meek and lowly Redeemer. But what is self-denial? Is it sackcloth on the loins? Is it a wooden block for a pillow? Is it pulse or lentil-pottage for the daily meal? Is it a crypt or kennel for one's lodg-

ing? Ah no! In all this flesh-pinching there is often a subtle self-pleasing: but when the temper is up to rule the spirit, and over a "manly revenge" to let Christian magnanimity triumph,—that is self-denial. To take pains with dull children, and with ignorant and insipid adults, —that is self-denial. To hide from the left hand what the right is doing: to ply the task when fellow-labourers drop away and lookers-on wax few: for the Lord's sake still to follow up the work when the world gives you no credit, —that is self-denial. When you might tell your own exploits, to let another praise you, and not your own lips; and when a fancy-touch would make a good story a great deal better, to let the "yea" continue simply yea,—that is self-denial. Rather than romantic novelties to prefer duty with its sober commonplace routine, and to stand at your post when the knees are feeble and the heart is faint, —that is self-denial. From personal indulgence,—from the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, to save wherewithal to succour the indigent and help forward Christ's kingdom on earth,—that is self-denial.

"O could we learn that sacrifice,
What lights would all around us rise!
How would our hearts with wisdom talk
Along life's dullest, dreariest walk!

We need not bid for cloister'd cell
Our neighbour and our work farewell,
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high
For sinful man beneath the sky.

The trivial round, the common task,
Would furnish all we ought to ask;
Room to deny ourselves; a road
To bring us daily nearer God."

4. Wandering on the strand, it sometimes happens that the castaway picks up a golden apple or some bright fruit which reminds him of his own sunny clime, and makes him wish that he were there once more. And so when there is winter in his world,—when joy has fled away and nights are growing dark, the Christian pilgrim sometimes finds at his feet an unexpected memento of his heavenly home. It has descended from the Tree of Life, and brought down to Patmos the very air of Paradise; and as he presses to his lips the great and precious promise, he can only cry, "Even so, Lord Jesus; come quickly." He is an exile from Eden, and as there is now little to detain him here, he longs "to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." "Do you feel reconciled?" asked a friend of the dying Payson. "Oh! that is too cold," he exclaimed. "I rejoice, I triumph. And this happiness will endure as long as God Himself, for it consists in admiring and adoring Him." Or as a few days before he wrote to his sister, "Were I to adopt the figurative language of Bunyan, I might date this letter from the land of Beulah, of which I have been for some weeks a happy inhabitant. The celestial city is full in my view. Its glories beam upon me, its breezes fan me, its odours are wafted to me, its sounds strike upon my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of death, which now appears but as an insignificant rill, that may be crossed at a single step, whenever God shall give permission. The Sun of Righteousness has been gradually drawing nearer and nearer, and now he fills the whole hemisphere, pouring forth a flood of glory, in which I seem

to float like an insect in the beams of the sun, exulting yet almost trembling, while I gaze on this excessive brightness, and wondering with unutterable wonder why God should deign thus to shine upon a sinful worm."

A frame of mind like this is the vestibule of heaven; and as it is in acquaintance with Christ that such blessedness began, so it is in closer communion with the Saviour that this blessedness expands and becomes the joy of a glorified existence. "To him that overcometh will I grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." The Tree of Life is transplanted, and the old Eden is extinct; but for His ransomed God has provided some better thing than that ancient Paradise. In the fair climes of that celestial country there is reproduced in a more exalted rendering all that was bright and beautiful in Adam's native garden, with this unspeakable enhancement, that probation and peril are for ever past and all is now fruition. There is no more curse, and the tears with which our first parents quitted their aboriginal bowers, and which since then have been so often shed in quitting a loved home or familiar haunts, will be wiped away on entering a scene whence the inhabitant knows that he shall go no more out. The presence of God is no longer limited to the cool of the day, but is itself the day-spring of the glad eternity,—the palpable pervasion and immortal sunshine of the holy place; and "there is no night there." Nor can sin ever enter. No serpent can scale the brilliant battlements, or cross the crystal river, or glide through the green pastures of that blood-bought Paradise; and the flaming sword which let the ransomed

sinner pass, only shuts out the tempter and the fear of evil. Knowing as they are known, overwhelmed with the beatific vision and all those disclosures which it will require eternity to study and comprehend, there will be no inducement to snatch forbidden fruit or intrude into hidden mysteries; and now that the cherub-sentinel has changed his station, and now that the Tree of Life grows on either side the river, now that there is no barrier of flesh and blood to interrupt communion with the Saviour, and no sin to hinder access,—the denizen of that free and forgiven country may spend a celestial noon beneath the balmy shadow, and for holier services and yet higher praise may quaff from the clustered boughs fresh draughts of immortal vigour.

THE VINE.

"UNITY in diversity" is a principle by which the entire creation is pervaded; and, as the Former of the universe is the Father of our spirits, He has adapted the one to the other: and whilst the variety is a source of immediate and universal enjoyment, the oneness which underlies that variety is to the more thoughtful minds at once the germ of poetry and the root of natural religion.

However distinct, and at first sight dissimilar, the objects may appear, a closer inspection always reveals a latent identity. They are the filling-up of one great plan; they bear the stamp of the self-same Intelligence. And this ultimate identity running through the multiform creation forces on our minds the conviction that the Creator is one, whilst it reveals His varied benevolence and His boundless resources. As in the experiment where the philosopher sowed seeds which grew up green letters,[1] the materials with which the Eternal writes His name may vary; but the style of the handwriting is evermore the same. And whether in illuminated characters He paints it on the field, or in starry alphabet bids

[1] Dr. Beattie.

it flame from the face of the firmament; whether He works it in the curious mosaic of a shell, or in Hebrew letters inscribes it on tables of stone, Devotion recognises its Heavenly Father's Hand, and adores the matchless autograph.

The same principle in the creation, with the corresponding propensity in our own minds, accounts for the force which all feel in analogical reasoning, and the delight which most persons derive from metaphorical language.

Deep in our nature there exists a tendency to seek amongst all interesting objects points of resemblance; and when some intuition keener than our own reveals that resemblance, we bow to its truth or acclaim to its beauty. For instance, when human life is compared to the course of a river,—cradled in the moss-fringed fountain, tripping gaily through its free and babbling infancy, swelling into proud and impetuous youth, burdened with the great ships in its sober and utilitarian manhood, and then merging in the ocean of eternity,—who is there that does not see the resemblance, and in seeing it find his mind richer by at least one bright thought? There may be little resemblance betwixt a clouded sky and the human countenance; and yet, when that sky opens and lets through the sunshine, we say that it is smiling, and when that dull countenance opens and lets out the soul we say that it is shining; and in the metaphor we feel that we have given a new animation to the sun, a new new glory to "the human face divine."

This tendency to metaphor, and the universal delight in parables, comparisons, and figures of speech, are no

mere freaks of man's fancy. They have their foundation in the mind and method of Deity, whose thoughts are all in harmony, and whose works and ways are all connected with one another, so that what we call the imagination of the poet, if his reading be correct, is really the logic of Omniscience. And without expatiating further on the subject at present, we may here recall the fact that already the universe contains one masterpiece of Infinite Wisdom, in whom all the diversities co-exist and make up one matchless unity. In Christ, at once very God and very man, the Father of Eternity, and yet for a season the tenant of the tomb; in Christ, with His glorified materialism and præ-material divinity, our Brother, and yet the Son of the Highest, the Root and yet the Offspring of David, we have the substance of all shadows, the conciliation of all opposites, the acme of every excellence, the pinnacle of every perfection, the glorious and ultimate Unity in whom centre and co-exist the whole of Creation's boundless diversities. Like creatures flying through the night, we touch what feels at first a separate leaf or a solitary plant, but it proves to be the outmost twig of a great tree. Traced down a little way, the little twig joins another, and both together spring from a branch, which followed out is found with its twin branch to issue from a goodly bough, till at last all branchings and bifurcations conduct you back to the ultimate unity in the common trunk and central stem. So, every object in Nature, and every incident in Providence, however isolated it may appear for a moment, is found to have relations which link it to some other, and these again have a connexion

which leads back to something deeper and still more intimate; till at last in the Alpha and Omega, the Tree of Life Himself, you reach the source of all variety and the centre of each divergence, the counterpart to every Hebrew type and the key to Nature's mighty emblem.

If these views are correct,—if the Person of Immanuel is that adorable Unity which within itself includes and harmonizes all diversities of goodness and beauty, we see that there is a foundation in the nature of things for the typical instruction so abundant in Scripture, and we perceive with what significance it was that Jesus said of Himself, "I am THE TRUE VINE." In applying the types or expounding the symbols of Holy Writ, we may fall into errors of detail, but we are still secure in the general principle. And if we study them rightly, they will confer a double benefit. Like Jacob, when his pillow of rock became the first step in a staircase which ascended to God and the angels, they will make the stones of the field the starting-point of holy meditations, and will fill the landscapes of earth with light from Heaven.

Were you going early in the year to the banks of the Rhine, you would see the people on every slope busied about some important plant. To your nearer view it looks little better than a wooden peg, a dead and sapless pin. But return in September, and you will find that the wintry peg has shot into a pillar of verdure, and from purple bunches is pouring fatness and fragrance on the soil. The shout of the vintage and the brimming vat explain the labours of the spring.

On the hills of Palestine the Heavenly Husbandman planted a goodly vine. But at first it had no form nor comeliness, and promised little. It was a root out of a dry ground, and few expected that it would come to anything. And when its heavenly origin was hinted, in a rage the men of Nazareth cast it over their vineyard-wall, and soon afterwards the men of Jerusalem took the tender Plant, and having bruised and trampled it under their indignant feet, they hoped that they had destroyed it for ever. But the Heavenly Husbandman did not lose sight of it. He planted it again. This time, however, He concealed it from view. He so contrived, that though the branches were seen, the vine stock should no longer be visible. Grafts might be joined to it and fruit might be gathered, but the stem itself was hidden.

A few weeks passed on, and a warm rain fell. A sweet and springy odour filled the air. It was the budding of the invisible Vine. It was the tender grape appearing. There were thousands of blossoms; and from year to year thereafter there was many a glorious vintage. And though rude days have followed; though the passengers have plucked it, and the persecutor has often torn the branches and burnt them in the fire, the Lord of Hosts will ere long return and visit this His Vine. He will cast out the heathen and plant it. He will prepare room before it, and cause it to take deep root, and fill the earth.

The hills of the Millennium will be covered with its shade, and the boughs thereof will be like the goodly cedars.

This earth was the land of the curse—it was the world

of sin, death, and sorrow,—when God sent His Son. He freighted the Mediator's person with life, righteousness, peace of conscience, and every mercy that a sinner needs. "As the Father hath life in Himself, so did He give to the Son to have life in Himself," and thus furnished with an abundance of life, He sent the Only-Begotten into the world. But the world hated Him. It saw nothing attractive in Him. It rejected the Saviour. It slew Him. But God raised Him again, and withdrew Him out of mortal sight. Though now hidden from our view, He remains what He was during the days of His visible Incarnation. He is still the Saviour. He is still the sole repository of heavenly blessings for our guilty and necessitous race. Though invisible, He is the great Vine-stock in which all merit and spiritual vitality reside. It is from His fulness that salvation is derived, and only from the grace that is in Him that we can get anything gracious. Though Himself unseen, His members are visible. Believers are the branches of this wondrous Vine. At Pentecost they were freshest and fairest. They are, perhaps, equally numerous, but more sparse and straggling now. But to see the goodly Vine in its glory, we must wait till the present winter is past, and the summer of the earth is come; till for pardon and peace willing millions resort to Immanuel, and the rejected Root has become the Plant of Renown.

Those whom Christ originally addressed were fond of parables, and there was no instruction which they more enjoyed than that which was conveyed in emblems and figures. But perhaps your mind has no turn for metaphor. You are rather confused than assisted by it. You

have difficulty in following an allegory where people are compared to the branches of a Vine; and when Christ speaks of a man being a branch "in Himself," and of "abiding in Himself,"[1] you do not clearly apprehend it. But with a little consideration you will easily make out the main idea. Christ compares himself to a Vine, and when you remember what a glad and lifesome tree it is,—the tree through which vegetative vigour pours the fastest and most freely, and the tree with which the most refreshful and exulting associations were connected; and when you further recollect that it was to bring abundance of life and felicity that Jesus came into the world, you can see how naturally in this "Tree of Life" Jesus found the emblem of Himself. But this detached and independent vine-sapling which I hold in my hand,—how is it to be made partaker of the life and fatness of the living vine? By creating the closest connexion possible. You engraft it. You take this leafless rod, and you insert it in the quick vine-stock, and speedily the graft has taken. Fibre by fibre, and vein by vein the sapling clings and coheres, till the life of the tree is the life of this adopted branch, and the graft buds and blossoms and matures its clusters from the flowing juices of the vine. And Jesus "has life in Himself." He is now a man of joys. He knows that the Father loves Him, and having completed the work given Him to do, He rests again in the Father's bosom, secure in the Father's complacency, and most blessed for evermore. But here is a dead and sapless soul, here is a spirit to which holy joy is a stranger, and to which God

[1] See John xv. 1-10.

is still unknown as a reconciled God and a loving Father. How is this dead and dreary soul to be made partaker of Christ's life and joy? By creating the closest possible connexion. That sapless twig lives when united to the Vine. That sinner lives when united to the Saviour. But what is the closest possible connexion between the sinner and the Saviour? It is such a connexion as joins soul to soul. It is such a connexion as joins the feeble and finite soul of the sinner to the holy and Divine soul of the Saviour. It is such a union as confidence and love, congeniality and dependence, create. It is *confidence*,—for Jesus died that He might bring us unto God, and when a soul is persuaded that Jesus is able to save to the uttermost and resigns itself entirely to Him as a sufficient Saviour,—the soul which thus clings to Christ for salvation is by God regarded as one with Christ. A soul which trusts in the Surety will never come into condemnation, for the Surety would thereby be condemned; and a soul which cleaves to the Lord Jesus for pardon is justified already, for it is now part of that Substitute who was justified long ago. And this union is *love*. You speak of souls that are knit together when they are affectionately attached to one another; and Christ and the Christian are joined by an intense, mutually-pervading, and death-surviving love. Accordingly, He Himself calls this union a "continuance in His love." And it is *congeniality*. When tastes are identical, when persons love the same things and hate the same things, when desires move in concert, when the one treasures up the other's words and tries to anticipate the other's wishes, you say

that hearts in such harmony are one spirit. And it is one spirit which fills Christ and the Christian—Christ's "words abide in him" (ver. 7). There is many an endeared saying of his Lord hidden in his fondest memory. And these sayings of Christ do not merely alight on him like rain on the vineyard, but live and abide in him like vital sap in the Vine. And these loved sayings and abiding words come out in new obedience (ver. 10), "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love." And it is *dependence.* Where parties are united in any way to one another, one of whom is greatly superior in strength, or wisdom, or skill, it becomes natural and inevitable for the inferior to depend on the strength, or wisdom, or skill of that other. Now the believer finds himself so weak, and ignorant, and sinful, that he is compelled to look to his Lord, in whom all these resources abound. Without Christ he can do nothing. But he has learned to lean on Him, who of God is made to him wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification. Without Christ he cannot pacify an offended God; without Christ he cannot escape the curse of a broken law; without Christ he can do nothing to deliver himself from hell, nor secure his persevering progress to heaven; without Christ he cannot subdue a single sin nor overcome a single temptation. He discovers that it needs an Almighty power to sanctify. "It needs the same power to enlighten his understanding as gave sight to blind Bartimeus; it needs the same power to quiet his conscience as said to the tempest, Peace, be still; it needs the same power to soften his hard and stony heart as melted rivers from the rock; the same power to convert

his carnal affections into spiritual as changed the water into wine; the same to subdue his rebellious passions as expelled the devils from the man possessed; and the same power to make him pure of heart and fit for glory as made the leper clean."[1] And for all holy obedience, he verifies the saying of Jesus, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me."

Wherever a soul believes in Jesus, loves Him, is made one spirit with Him, and depends on Him for wisdom, strength, and righteousness, that soul is united to Jesus. That soul is *in* the Saviour, even as the branch is in the Vine; that soul is dear to God. It is accepted in the Beloved, and becomes an object of the Father's solicitude and care. And it will experience the benefits of this union. It will be fruitful; it will be purified; it will be powerful in prayer; for if union to Jesus be salvation,—productiveness, sanctification, and prevalency in prayer, are effects of this union which He Himself has specified.[2]

1. The living branch is fruitful. The chemist who can analyse the fruit of the vine finds many ingredients there. Of these no single one, nor any two together, would form the juice of the grape; but the combination of all yields the polished and delicious berry, which every one knows so well. In different climates, and even in different seasons, the proportion and blending of these constituents may vary, but that is not a good cluster where any is wanting. The fruit of the true Vine has also been

[1] Clarkson's *Sermons*, folio, p. 482. [2] John xv. 5, 2, 7.

analysed, and in the best specimens the nine following ingredients are found (Gal. v. 22):—

LOVE,	LONG-SUFFERING,	FAITH,
JOY,	GENTLENESS,	MEEKNESS,
PEACE,	GOODNESS,	TEMPERANCE.

In poor samples there is a deficiency of one or other of these elements. A dry and diminutive sort is lacking in peace and joy. A tart kind, which sets the teeth on edge, owes its austerity to its scanty infusion of gentleness, goodness, and meekness. There is a watery, deliquescent sort, which for the want of long-suffering is not easily preserved; and there is a flat variety, which having no body of faith or temperance, answers few useful purposes. Love is the essential principle which is in no case entirely absent; and by the glistening fulness and rich aroma which its plentiful presence creates, you can recognise the freshest and most generous clusters; whilst the predominance of some other element gives to each its distinguishing flavour, and marks the growth of Eshcol, Sibmah, or Lebanon.

(1.) Wherever there is union to Christ there is *love.* This, as we have said, is the essential principle. Whatever else there be, if there be not love, it profits nothing, it proves nothing. Love to God and our neighbour is the essence of piety. It is the body, the basis, the staple element; and if the great commandment, and the next greatest, be absent, whatever else there be, there is not Christianity. Reader, have you got it? To Christ's question, "Lovest thou me?" is it your answer, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee"?

Then, if you love Jesus, you will love Him whose express image Jesus is. To God in Christ, your soul will be attached in gratitude, submission, and complacency. You will not wish Him less holy, less righteous, less true. Awed by His glorious majesty, and melted by His ineffable mercy, all that is dust and ashes in you will be humbled, and all that is devout and filial will be kindled into grateful adoration. If nothingness and sin bid you be silent, the sight of your Great Representative, gone back to the bosom of His Father, inspires you with a joyful assurance and a humble confidence Godward; and, boldest where you are most abased, beneath the Cross you learn to cry, Abba, Father. You love Him who first loved you, and "feeling it sweet to be accepted of God on any grounds, to be accepted in his own beloved Son, you feel is sweeter far."[1]

(2.) And *joy*. The essence of love is attachment. Joy is the happiness of love. It is love exulting. It is love aware of its own felicity, and rioting in riches which it has no fear of exhausting. It is love taking a view of its treasure, and surrendering itself to bliss without foreboding. "God's promises appear so strong, so solid, so substantial, more so than the rocks and everlasting hills; and His perfections, what shall I say of them? When I think of one, I wish to dwell upon it for ever; but another and another, equally glorious, claims a share of admiration; and when I begin to praise, I wish never to cease, but to find it the commencement of that song which will never end. Very often have I felt as if I could that

[1] Nevins' *Remains*, p. 27.

moment throw off the body, without first going to bid them farewell that are at home in my house. Let who will be rich, or admired, or prosperous, it is enough for me that there is such a God as Jehovah, such a Saviour as Jesus, and that they are infinitely and unchangeably glorious and happy!"[1] And in a similar frame another felt, "Were the universe destroyed, and I the only being in it besides God, HE is fully adequate to my complete happiness; and had I been in an African wood, surrounded by venomous serpents, and devouring beasts, and savage men, in such a frame I should be the subject of perfect peace and exalted joy."[2]

(3.) *Peace.* If joy be love exulting, peace is love reposing. It is love on the green pastures, it is love beside the still waters. It is that great calm which comes over the conscience, when it sees the atonement sufficient and the Saviour willing. It is unclouded azure in a lake of glass: it is the soul which Christ has pacified, spread out in serenity and simple faith, and the Lord God, merciful and gracious, smiling over it.

(4.) *Long-suffering.* This is love enduring. If the trial come direct from God, it is enough. It is correction. It is his Heavenly Father's hand, and with Luther the disciple cries, "Strike, Lord, strike. But, oh! do not forsake me." If the trial come from Christian brethren, till it be seven-fold seventy times repeated, love to Jesus demands forgiveness. If it come from worldly men, it is the occasion for that magnanimity which recompenses evil with good. And in every case, it is an opportunity for following a Saviour whom sufferings made perfect.

[1] Payson's *Life*, chap. 19.

[2] *Memoirs of Samuel Pearce.*

That Saviour never loved the Father more intensely than when His Father's face was hid, and when the bitter cup proclaimed His justice terrible, and His truth severe. One apostle denied Him, and all the disciples forsook Him ; but Jesus prayed for Peter, whilst Peter was cursing, and His love followed the rest, even when they were running away. Jerusalem killed Him ; but in foresight of the guilty deed, it was over Jerusalem that Jesus wept ; and when the deed was done, in publishing pardon and the peace of God, it was at Jerusalem that evangelists were directed to begin.

(5.) *Gentleness,* or affectionateness.[1] This is love in society. It is love holding intercourse with those around it. It is that cordiality of aspect, and that soul of speech, which assure us that kind and earnest hearts may still be met with here below. It is that quiet influence which, like perfumed flame from an alabaster lamp, fills many a home with light and warmth and fragrance all together. It is the carpet, soft and deep, which, whilst it diffuses a look of ample comfort, deadens many a creaking sound. It is the curtain which from many a beloved form, wards off at once the summer's glow, and the winter's wind. It is the pillow on which sickness lays its head and forgets half its misery, and to which death comes in a balmier dream. It is considerateness. It is tenderness of feeling. It is warmth of affection. It is promptitude of sympathy. It is love in all its depth, and all its delicacy. It is every melting thing included in that matchless grace, "the GENTLENESS of Christ."[2]

[1] χρηστότης. [2] 2 Cor. x. 1.

(6.) *Goodness,* or beneficence. Love in action, love with its hand at the plough, love with the burden on its back. It is love carrying medicine to the sick, and food to the famished. It is love reading the Bible to the blind, and explaining the Gospel to the felon in his cell. It is love at the Sunday class, or in the Ragged-school. It is love at the hovel-door, or sailing far away in the missionary ship. But whatever task it undertakes, it is still the same,—Love following His footsteps, "who went about continually DOING GOOD."

(7.) *Faith.* Whether it means trust in God, or fidelity to principle and duty, Faith is love in the battle-field. It is constancy following hard after God, when the world drags downward, and the flesh cries "Halt." It is zeal holding fast sound words when fervour is costly and sound words are obnoxious. It is firmness marching through fire and through water to the post where duty calls and the captain waits. It is Elijah before Ahab. It is Stephen before the Sanhedrim. It is Luther at Worms. It is the martyr in the flames. Nay, it is a greater than all,—it is Jesus in the desert.[1] It is Jesus in Gethsemane. It is Jesus on the cross. And it is whosoever pursuing the path, or finishing the work which God has given him, like the great Forerunner, does not fear to die.

(8.) *Meekness* is love at school,—love at the Saviour's school. It is Christian lowlihood. It is the disciple learning to know himself; learning to fear, and distrust, and abhor himself. It is the disciple practising the sweet but self-emptying lesson of putting on the Lord Jesus,

[1] Matt. iv. 1-11.

and finding all his righteousness in that righteous Other. It is the disciple learning the defects of his own character, and taking hints from hostile as well as friendly monitors. It is the disciple praying and watching for the improvement of his talents, the mellowing of his temper, and the amelioration of his character. It is the loving Christian at the Saviour's feet, learning of Him who is meek and lowly, and finding rest for his own soul.

(9.) *Temperance*,—love in the gymnasium, love enduring hardness, love seeking to become healthful and athletic, love striving for the mastery in all things, and bringing the body under. It is superiority to sensual delights, and it is the power of applying resolutely to irksome duties for the Master's sake. It is self-denial and self-control. Fearful lest it should subside to gross carnality, or waste away into shadowy and hectic sentiment, temperance is love alert and timeously astir; sometimes rising before day for prayer, sometimes spending that day on tasks which laziness or daintiness declines. It is love with girt loins, and dusty feet, and hands which work makes horny. It is love with the empty scrip but the glowing cheek,—love subsisting on pulse and water, but grown so healthful and so hardy, that it "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

Reader, if you abide in Jesus,—if His words abide in you, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful. Graces such as these will be in you, and abound. Is it so? The great vine-principle, the main element of the Christian character, holy love, does it abound in you? And blending with it, tingeing it and deriving sweetness from it, can

you detect from time to time joy in God, peace of conscience, patience in suffering, and forgiveness of injury, affectionateness, beneficence, trust in God, and trustworthiness in your place and calling, a lowly willingness to learn, and a readiness to take up the cross and deny yourself? When Christians live close to Christ His mind is transfused into theirs. "Purity and love shine forth in their character: meekness and truth guide their footsteps. Nay, in the experience of some, so great has been the change, that the very expression of their countenance has altered. Thus was it with Moses and Stephen. These blessed saints were full of God; Christ was in them of a truth; and his likeness was thus by them peculiarly reflected. Nor is it wonderful that such should sometimes be the case with believers; for, when He thus fills their hearts with His presence, when His peace dwells there; when the calm joy which He felt, when rejoicing in spirit, reigns there; there must needs be gentleness in their manners, and heavenliness in their talk, and meekness in their eye, and angelic serenity and conscious elevation in their whole countenance."[1]

2. Every fruitful branch is purged. "The husbandman purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit." It is the propensity of even fruitful branches to wanton into excessive foliage. But besides spoiling the appearance of the vine, the sap spent on the leaves is stolen from the grapes, and the excessive shade keeps out the sun. The husbandman prunes these shoots and suckers away, and while he makes the branch more sightly, he lets the noon-beams

[1] *Thoughts on Union to Christ*, by Sosthenes. Edin. 1838, p. 213.

freely in, and makes the clusters richer. So is it with the sincerest Christians. In prosperous weather, when all goes well with them, they are apt to flaunt out in worldliness, and luxury, and pride. They grow selfish. They study their own ease. They seek great things for themselves. And the Husbandman, watchful and considerate, consulting His own glory and the fruitfulness of the Vine,—the Husbandman comes, and with the pruning-shears of some afflictive providence, lops the deforming shoots away.

"Man's chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy Him for ever." This was the thought which conveyed reproof and new quickening to a most amiable Christian,[1] after her greatest bereavement. "I felt that for the last twelve years I had misunderstood the great object for which I was made; that, if not my chief, a very high end with me had been to be happy in my husband and make him happy in me. But now I felt that the highest happiness of a rational mind ought to arise, from answering the purpose for which God made it; and therefore that I ought to be happy in glorifying God, and not in enjoying myself." And it is to this result that every trial with which God visits His people is tending. It is to shut them up to His service as their chief end, and to Himself as their chiefest joy. It is not to hurt but to heal the tree that the husbandman handles the pruning-hook. In deep dejection of spirit, Mr. Cecil was pacing to and fro in the Botanic Garden at Oxford, when he observed a fine specimen of the pomegranate almost cut through the stem. On asking

[1] Mrs. Susan Huntington.

the gardener the reason, he got an answer which explained the wounds of his own bleeding spirit. "Sir, this tree used to shoot so strong, that it bore nothing but leaves. I was, therefore, obliged to cut it in this manner, and when it was almost cut through, then it began to bear plenty of fruit." Ye suffering members of Christ, be thankful for every sorrow which weakens a lust or strengthens a grace. Though it should be a cut to the heart, be thankful for every sin and idol shorn away. Be thankful for whatever makes your conscience more tender, your thoughts more spiritual, and your character more consistent. Be thankful that it was the pruning-knife and not the weeding-hook which you felt: for if you suffer in Christ, you suffer with Him; and if with Him you suffer, with Him you shall also reign.

3. A third consequence of abiding in Jesus is prevalency in prayer. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." One reason is that Christ's mind and the Father's agree, and Christ's mind is in the constant Christian. His will is merged in Christ's will; and instead of the petulant and unreasonable requests which worldly or divided hearts are apt to urge, a holy solicitude for God's glory predominates in his prayers. The first petition which his Master taught him covers and qualifies all the rest; and whatsoever he may ask he will not revoke the primary behest, "Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy name." The believer who abides in Jesus obtains answers to his prayers, because his sanctified will is apt to desire things according to the will of God. But more than this,

abiding in Jesus is nearness to God. The man who knows not how to use the Mediator's name, may pray from a sense of duty, or under the urgency of present distress. But if mere duty compel him, there is no comfort nor enlargement in the formal exercise; or if distress constrain him, coming as a stranger, there is no confidence in his approach, and he has no security that God has heard him. He stands in the empty vestibule, and without obtaining a glance of the Sovereign, at last leaves his petition, uncertain whether it shall ever reach its destination. The sinner who comes in the name of Jesus is ushered at once to the Throne of Grace, and obtains the propitious ear of an all-sufficient God. And the sinner who abides in Jesus, who habitually comes in the Intercessor's name, finds in prayer not only entrance to the palace of the King, but access to that Father whom Christ has taught him to regard with the affectionate security and tender reverence of a child. Prayer is his daily visit to his Heavenly Father's dwelling—the hallowed chamber whose door the name of Jesus opens—the sweet and endeared closet where day by day he has told his griefs and fears, and wants and sins, and from which he has oft departed rich in daily grace and radiant in his Heavenly Father's smile.

Reader, beloved and longed-for, have you understood these things? Do you not allow that your own soul is naturally fruitless and lifeless? Do you not confess that you have no more right to immortality, and no more power for holiness, than the severed sapling has power to blossom and bear fruit so long as it abides alone? But do you equally perceive that Jesus is the true Vine? Are

you persuaded that there is so much life in Him, that if you could only share His life you would live also? so much merit in Him, that if it could only be made your own you would be righteous also? so much holy energy in Him, that could it only be imparted to you, you too would have a spiritual mind, and would delight in doing the will of God? Do you perceive that Christ Jesus is the great Repository of justifying Righteousness and sanctifying grace? Do you distinctly realize these two things; that you yourself are empty, and that in the Lord Jesus all fulness dwells?

But how is the empty scion to profit by the teeming Vine? How is a connexion to be created betwixt the Mediator's fulness and your own vacuity? How is it that Christ and you shall become so truly one that His beauty shall be on you and His spirit within you? We have already said that it is by believing Him, loving Him, copying from Him, and depending on Him. A shorter answer is His own. It is by letting Christ's word enter and abide. The disciples were made genuine, "clean,"—they got the real Vine-nature from the moment when they admitted Christ's words into willing hearts. And you too will be clean, the graft will strike, from the moment when you credit the word of Jesus. Should you credit that saying of Jesus, "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" or should you comply with that other saying of Jesus, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" should you abandon yourself to all the blessed-

ness of believing what the True Witness says; should you suffer your weary soul this day to sink into the arms of that Saviour who rejoices to pardon and is mighty to save —the first entrance of such a word, and the first response of such a faith, would be the date of your better life and the commencement of your union to Christ.

— The graft has taken. At first the juncture may be very slight, a single thread or fibre; and it is not till you try to part them that you find that they are knit together —that their life is one—and that the force which plucks away the graft must also wound the Vine. And your faith may yet be no more than a single filament. It may be only one point of attachment by which you have got joined to the Lord Jesus. It may be only one solitary sentence—one isolated invitation or promise of which you have got undoubting hold. But hold it fast. If it be the word of Jesus, cling to it. There is life in it, and, held fast, it will be life to you. One promise of Jesus credited, one invitation of Jesus accepted, is enough to make such union betwixt Himself and you, that the violence which sunders, if death to you, would be a bleeding heart to Him. Hold fast the faithful saying then, and as you cling to it you will draw closer and closer to the living Vine. The surface of quick contact will enlarge, and as thread by thread, and vein by vein it widens, as word by word and line by line the sayings of Jesus get hidden in your heart, the tokens of vitality will become to yourself and others joyfully distinct. And though you may fear to-day that you have no interest in Christ—think no more of that; think of what He says. Believe Him steadfastly;

and as sure as He came into the world to save sinners, He will save you. Cleave to His assurances in all their breadth, and though you may feel yourself little better than a reprobate at present, you will be a trophy of redeeming grace in the ages to come. And though you see no fruits of the Spirit yet, let Christ's word abide in you, and you will see them anon. And though you dread lest the faint hold you have got may end in a falling away, hold on till the feeble contact of this moment grow into a complete coalescence, and in joyful assurance of oneness with a sin-pardoning and sanctifying Saviour, you will be able to exclaim, "I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

THE CEDAR.

"The righteous shall grow like the cedar."

LEBANON has sometimes been regarded as a type of Jesus Christ. Among surrounding mountains the loftiest and fairest, it may suggest to a devout and willing mind that Mighty One, who is fairer than all His fellows.[1] Its roots of everlasting rock, on the one side struck deep in Palestine, and on the other side reaching far into the Pagan lands, are like that righteousness, "great as the mountains," which the Son of God wrought out for Jews and Gentiles,[2] and like the Rock of Ages himself, amidst His supremacy of power and wisdom, still partaker with His brethren. The streams of water trickling down its slopes, and gushing through its fragrant glens, may give a hint of heavenly influences and the Holy Spirit, through the Saviour's wounded side, flowing down to redeemed souls and onward to a widening Church. Its coronet of snow, glancing in the sunny sky, is like that snowy hair[3] —the halo of enshrined Divinity—which marks the Son of Man in heaven; whilst its verdant ladder, linking heaven to earth, brings to remembrance the incarnation and Immanuel, "God with us." The corn which gilds its

[1] Ps. xlv. 2. [2] Ps. xxxvi. 6; Rom. i. 17. [3] Rev. i. 14.

ample skirts, the vines which empurple its royal robe, and the starry blossoms which spangle it all over, may shadow the various joys which have sprung up the memorial of Messiah's advent. But it is not the corn nor the vine nor the lily which is the glory of Lebanon. It is Lebanon growing and waving and scattering fragrance in the cedar,—it is the vegetating rock—the arborescent mountain,—it is this which is Lebanon's glory. And it is not European civilisation and the march of liberty and the diffusion of refinement and learning; nor are they the incidental benefits resulting from His advent which bring the brightest lustre to the name of Jesus. But it is His Spirit embodied—His hidden life again appearing in some beneficent, resolute, lofty believer,—it is the Christ-like Christian who is the glory of Christ.

The first thing that strikes us in the cedar is the firmness of its root. It is not content to drop a few slack fibres into the yielding loam; but it thrusts its sturdy wedge into the cloven rock, and pushes far below the brushwood in search of stronger moorings; and so when the tempest comes down, it springs elastic to the hurricane on its buttress of subterraneous boughs, and amid all the veerings of the blast finds gallant purchase in its network of cables. The cedar has a root. The Christian has faith. He knows whom to believe, and he knows that he believes Him. He is well persuaded that Jesus is the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners. He is fully assured that Christ's blood cleanseth from all sin, and has efficacy enough to cancel his own. He knows that Christ offers to be a Saviour to himself, and he thankfully con-

sents that He shall. And as his mind is made up on the sin-atoning efficacy and God-glorifying tendency of the decease accomplished at Jerusalem, he is equally persuaded of the surpassing loveliness and peerless claims of Immanuel Himself. He has discovered so much of grace and truth, so much of Divine glory and transforming goodness in the Beloved of the Father, and is so affected by finding that this Saviour is willing to be his guide through life and his portion in eternity, that his choice is fixed and his heart is won. For him to live will be Christ. And so the beginning of all blessedness is to possess clear views and a conclusive faith. Some deprecate distinct ideas. They prefer music without words—the goodly sound of the gospel without its significance. And if they have faith, it is faith in confusion—faith without solid foundation. If they be cedars, they are cedars planted in mud—cedars in the sand. The cedars of Lebanon are rooted in the wiry sod, and riveted in the mountain rock. Know what to believe, and why. Read and hear and think and pray till your realizations be vivid and your convictions sure and steadfast. Never rest till you know beyond all controversy, if you do not know it already, that the Bible is God's book—nor till you exactly understand and can easily state the one way of salvation. Never rest till you be able to intrust your everlasting interests to Jesus Christ, nor till you have some clear evidence that you are born again, and so made meet for the kingdom of heaven. Never rest till you know that your Redeemer liveth, nor till you feel that because He liveth you shall live also. "Your case will

be very trying if ever called to part with all for Christ, and not sure of Him either." And your departure from time will be dismal, if it be only the force of sickness that drives you away, and not the face of Jesus that draws you—if you see plainly the grisly hand and the levelled shaft of the destroyer to fly from, but not the open arms and smiling embrace of the Saviour to leap into.

The cedar is a thirsty tree. It is distinguished from many of its kindred by its avarice of water. We once saw two of them at Chelsea, which were said to have grown rapidly for a hundred years, till two ponds in the garden were filled with rubbish—after which they grew no more. And we remembered the words of Ezekiel, "Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon, with fair branches, and a shadowing shroud. The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high. His boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long, because of the multitude of waters. All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt great nations. Thus fair was his grandeur, for his root was by great waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him, the fir-trees were not like him, all the trees of Eden envied him."[1] And so there are Christians planted by the rivers,—believers of stately growth and luxuriant shadow,—so tall that, even in the garden of God, and among the cedars, they cannot be hid. For clear-eyed, time-penetrating faith, such an overtopping saint was Abraham, who athwart

[1] Ezek. xxxi. 3-9.

the expanse of nineteen centuries could see Christ's day, and exult with a disciple's joy. For prompt gratitude and ecstatic adoration, such an exalted saint was David, whose "glorying" slept so lightly that the softest touch awoke it,[1] and whose palpitating psaltery was so accustomed to Hallelujahs, that sorrow struck them out as readily as joy, and oft as he changed the cords the loyal harp would only sing the praises of Jehovah. For high-hearted devotion to his God, such an elevated saint was Daniel, whose lofty statesmanship, and spotless career, and lovely bearing to his brethren, were but the various expressions of the self-same thing to which he owed his miraculous escapes and his frequent revelations, —"O man greatly beloved, thy *prayer* is heard." And for burning love to Jesus Christ, self-forgetful, self-consuming, such a pre-eminent saint was Paul, to whom the beloved image of his Master shone in every type and shadow of the old economy; who could trace the myrrh-dropping fingers on the tongs and snuffers of the tabernacle; who could hear the voice of Jesus through the roar of the Adriatic, and lean upon His arm before Nero's judgment-seat; to whom the affliction in which Christ came was more welcome than an angel visitor, and as the summons to Christ's presence, death itself the object of desire. Such noble and commanding characters have there been, that none could hide them, and none were like them, and under the awe or the attraction of their goodness, good men wished to resemble them. "The trees of Eden envied them." It is not only Secretary

[1] Psalm lvii. 8.

Cecil who could have changed the palace for the preacher's cottage, rightly declaring, "There dwells as much happiness as can be known on earth;" but men of God have been provoked to press forward by the higher attainments of their brethren. "In one I have been animated by ardent activity for the glory of Christ, and the salvation of souls. In another I was pleased and softened by conspicuous meekness and gentleness of spirit. In a third, I was excited to love and good works by the fervent charity and brotherly kindness I beheld; and in a fourth, I was led to abase myself, and confess the pride of my heart, from the humility and brokenness of spirit which struck me." But when you come to look closely into the matter, and inquire to what secret cause these lofty cedars owe their growth; whence is it that their influential and impressive characters have derived their admirable grace, you always find that communion with God is the comprehensive source of their pre-eminent piety. They are abundant in religious exercises. They are mighty in the Scriptures. They are men of prayer. They are frequenters of the sanctuary. They are lovers of Christian fellowship. They are delighted observers of the Sabbath. But, after all, ordinances are to them but avenues or audience chambers. It is a Bible in which God speaks, a closet in which God hearkens, a sanctuary in which God's countenance shines, which they desire of the Lord, and seek to attain. And finding these, they find the living God Himself. Their fellowship is with the Father and the Son. They grow into the knowledge of the Divine perfections. They grow

in reverence and trust and love. They grow in perceptions of their own infinite vileness, and consequently in appreciation of the blood which pardons, and the Spirit who cleanses. They grow in self-distrust, and in dependence on God. They grow in self-condemnation, and in desire for that world where they shall sin no more. And whilst they are solidly growing in these inward experiences, they have, unawares to themselves, expanded the long branches and shadowing shroud of a great cedar. They have become the admiration and resort of others. The affections of many nestle in their boughs, and under their shadow dwell those who seek to profit by their counsel and their company. And just as there is growth in the multitude of waters, so there is decrepitude and decay where the waters fail. Like the Chelsea cedars, you will meet with professors who, for many years together, have not grown an inch. The rubbish of secularity or idleness has filled up the two pools of Bible-reading and secret prayer; and a stunted top, and a bundle of scrubby branches, a form of godliness, and a few evangelical phrases, are all that remains to commemorate their better days and prosperous beginning.

Another thing notable in the cedar is the vigour of its goodly boughs. Some trees, especially trees of the forest, growing in groups, have fragile boughs, and cannot abide in bleak and windy places. But the cedar is not more remarkable for the depth of its roots than for the strength of its branches. Not graffed on nor jointed in, but the brawny limbs deep-rooted in the massy bole, presenting a broad surface to the sun, and a thin edge to the tempest,

too elastic to snap, and too sturdily set in their socket to flutter in the breeze, these boughs are the very emblem of graceful strength and vigorous majesty. The Christian is a man of faith, and therefore a man of principle. His creed is principle. His practice is the same. Roots and branches make one tree; and faith and practice make one Christian. And those are the noblest and most serviceable Christians whose convictions are so firm, and whose characters are so strong, that nothing can affright them from their faith, and nothing deter them from their duty. In this respect, that father of the Church was a goodly cedar, who, when nearly the whole of Christendom had yielded to the God-denying heresy, lifted up in banishment his solitary voice, proclaiming the Saviour's Deity, "*Athanasius contra mundum.*" And they were goodly cedars those Waldensian worthies, who, amid the rocks and snows of Piedmont, through five-and-thirty persecutions, held fast the faith of Jesus, and though gashed by the Savoyard spear, and scorched by the Romish fagot, carried down from earliest time to the present hour Christ's pure Gospel. And he was a goodly cedar that Knox, who never feared the face of man. The fire of surrounding martyrdoms but warmed his roots, and gave a rush of quicker zeal to his fervent spirit; and whilst the axe of tyrants threatened, he firmly stood his ground till the idols fell, and the evangel flourished, and Scotland was free. And so was that Saxon Luther, whom the Emperor and his legions tried to terrify, but in the strength of God he came on them so mighty, that men and devils were dismayed;—that Luther, whom the

Pope's emissary tried to bribe, but was obliged to write back to his master, "This German beast has no regard for gold." And so were those goodly cedars, Huss and Jerome and Ridley and Patrick Hamilton, and many more, who counted their lives not dear that they might keep the testimony of Jesus; and amidst flames and torture finished their joyful course,—goodly cedars, which burning were not consumed. And not to multiply instances of confessor courage and martyr heroism, it is the self-same holy energy and decision of Christian character which have developed in self-denying services and costly sacrifices. Francke devoting all his time and all his fortune to his Orphan Hospital;—Vanderkemp, labouring as a brickmaker that he might be better fitted for his mission to the Hottentots;—the "Apostle of the Indians," wringing the rain-water from his clothes, and lying all night in the forest with nothing but a tree to shelter him;—Richard Baxter, refusing a bishopric;—John Wesley, preferring active labour to the preparation of a pamphlet in his own defence, "Brother, when I devoted to God my ease, my time, my life, did I except my reputation?"—those in whom Christian principle has been so strong, that at its bidding they have abandoned lucrative situations and tempting prospects, that they might keep holy the Sabbath, that they might preserve inviolate honesty, truthfulness, and integrity, that they might maintain a conscience void of offence; all these have put forth in their day the strength of the goodly cedar.

The cedar "grows" from year to year. The solid timber of its trunk grows denser and more compact, and new

layers are added to its girth, so that when it is eventually felled, you can almost say, by counting the concentric rings, how many summers it has seen. A living Christian grows. His character confirms. Duties, which when first performed were a crucifixion of the flesh and a triumph of faith, become easy and familiar habits. Promises, the fulfilment of which he at first credited on the mere authority of God, have now received the yea and amen of a long experience. In the homely words of Robert Bruce, "When I was young the Lord compelled me to live by faith, but now He feeds His old servant with great morsels of sense." Religion has become his better and more beauteous nature. He is past the danger of being ashamed of Christ. The awkwardness and fear of man, which made him once so fond of obscurity, and so afraid of the Jews, have passed away, and he is no longer averse to be ranked among the peculiar people, and regarded as a disciple of Jesus. There are apologies which he has ceased to make, and difficulties which he has ceased to feel. The lions of his youth have disappeared from the street, and the grasshopper, which was a burden to his early faith, is no disturbance to his maturer piety. There are sins which no longer beset him, and fears which no longer distress him. He has outgrown the spirit of speculation and controversy, and in meek docility sits down at the Master's feet, listening to—Thus saith the Lord. He has lost the desire for theological novelties and religious curiosities, and is only anxious for such new things as come out of the old Bible Treasury. He has outlived the dogmatism and harsh judging of his sanguine

prime, and no longer calls for fire from heaven on the Samaritans. He has left behind him the vanity which gave an air of flippancy and self-conceit to his earlier efforts, and raised a prejudice against himself, if not a distaste at religion. And, perhaps, he has outlived the fear of dying. At one time there was something ghastly in the look of the last enemy: but now, looking unto Jesus, he has learned to look beyond it. "There is something in the heart of Christ, and something in my own, which will not be at rest till I be set down upon Mount Zion. My eyes are turning gladly towards death, as the only sure period of His absence, and of these agonies of separation."[1]

Reader, would you know whether you are growing in grace? improving and advancing in personal Christianity? Then tell us, Is your faith more firm? Have the truths to which you once consented strengthened into settled convictions? Have they become first principles, and do they instinctively prompt you to corresponding action? Is your piety more pervasive? Does it decide your conduct, and give the casting vote in doubtful conjunctures of your history? "Does it regulate your daily demeanour as a husband, wife, parent, child, master, servant? Does it come abroad with you, out of your closets into your houses, your shops, your fields? Does it journey with you, and buy and sell for you?" Does it stand at your elbow, and keep watch at the door of your lips? Is your heart larger? Instead of looking merely on your own things, have you learned to look on the things of others? Do you love the brotherhood? And however much you

[1] Letters of Dr. John Love.

may prize your own denomination, do you rejoice to hear that godliness revives and religion spreads in other communions? Have you a public spirit?—a missionary spirit?—a spirit of zeal? In the efforts made to protect the Sabbath, to educate the ignorant, to reclaim the vicious, and ameliorate the condition of the working classes, do your whole souls accord? Have the present objects of philanthropy and patriotism your suffrage, your sympathy, your prayers? But, above all, does your love to the Lord Jesus grow? Whether it be in this world or another that you first expect to see Him as He is, do you desire the sight? Do you distinctly feel that the same Saviour who was such a disappointment to the Pharisees, and who, after He had been so long time with them, was so little known by Philip and Thomas and the rest,—are you sure that He is just the Saviour whom you desire, the very one whose presence will make, in any place, your heaven? Have you beheld His glory, full of grace and truth; and has that glory so inflamed your spirit that, like the ship to its haven, like the needle to its magnet, like the dove to its window, your soul will only reach its final rest when it comes home to Himself to depart no more?

The Maronites ascribe a singular faculty to the cedar. They say that on the approach of snowy weather it bends its branches upwards, so as to receive the falling flakes on the sides of a slender pyramid.[1] Prepared for the tempest,

[1] A French traveller of last century relates this, and apparently believes it. The cedar does not retain its self-protecting instinct in this country. There was a noble specimen in the Royal Gardens at Kew, on which a few winters ago the snow lay so heavy, that one windy night its great branches fractured, with a report so loud that the villagers mistook it for the firing of guns.

it only looks more graceful under it, and the storm which could not rend its boughs soon melts in irrigation round its roots. And though the cedar's power to predict the tempest may exist only in the imagination of these sons of the mountain, the lesson is to us not the less instructive. It is in a way somewhat similar that the Lord prepares His people for trial. Sometimes they have a presentiment of approaching calamity, and are led to cry, "Be not far from me, for trouble is near." But often and still more mercifully the coming evil is hid, and all their preparation is unwonted heavenly-mindedness. Like the cedar lifting up its boughs, they lift up their hearts, and know not that it is their Lord putting them in an attitude to bear the storm. They feel a joy unspeakable to-day, and find the explanation in the grief of the morrow. But still the joy of the Lord has strengthened them, the self-devotion and ascending affections of these preparatory moments have put them in the posture on which the tempest comes down most lightly. "On Easter Sunday, 1824," writes one, "I rose before six in the morning, earlier than I had been able to do for a month before, on account of indisposition. I kneeled down a minute or two after I had risen, and completely resigned myself to God, giving myself up to him in a way which I had never been able to do before. I rose from my knees with a sacred feeling that I was not my own, being 'bought with a price,' but the actual property of another, who I was perfectly willing should do what he pleased with his own. I had a peculiarly calm and composed state of mind all the day. In the evening I coughed twice, and broke a

blood-vessel."[1] And this was the beginning of the illness from which she never finally recovered, but during which Divine consolations never forsook her. In the Journal of Mrs. Fletcher one entry closes, "Certainly I have now scarce any cross. Thou hast made my cup to run over. Yea, thou hast made me to forget all my sorrows. There is not a comfort I can wish for which I have not; but, Lord, I want more grace." The next begins, "When I wrote last, I was arrived at the summit of human felicity. But, oh! how shall I write it!—On the 14th of August the dreadful moment came. The sun of my earthly joys for ever set, and the cloud arose which casts the sable on all my future life. At half-past ten that Sabbath night, I closed the eyes of my beloved." But from another passage it appears, that just before the attack which ended his earthly labours, Mr. Fletcher and herself had been led to a very express devotement of themselves to God; and the consequence was that her startled spirit soon found its quiet rest again. A thankful sense of her mercies made one pang the less in losing them; and the self-dedication in which she had so lately joined prepared her for the elevated and beneficent life which she subsequently led, worthy of one who had found a Husband in her Maker. And as the Lord secretly prepares His people for trial, so He supports them under it. Like the snow which shapes the cedar into a new and graceful figure, sorrow gives the Christian a new aspect of loveliness. It brings out the meekness, the endurance, and elasticity of the better nature within him; and it evinces how invulnerable is

[1] *Memorials of Two Sisters.* London, 1843; p. 114.

his hidden life. It was the cheerful remark of Mr. Wilberforce, when his wealth took wing, "I know not why my life is spared so long, except it be to show that a man can be as happy without a fortune as with one." Dr. Arnold had a sister who during twenty years of sickness made it a rule never once to allude to her sufferings; and there have been many of God's servants whom His Spirit has so mightily strengthened that it was a great sight, it was treading ground which God's presence made holy, when called to witness their patient endurance and joyful constancy. And like the cedar, ready for trial and supported under it, the believer is the better for it when it has passed away. What is spring but winter melted? What is the sap which now gushes vital in these branches, but the snow which lately covered them with its frosty load? And what is vigorous piety, but temptation vanquished? What is experience, but tribulation thawed by patience? And what is heaven itself, but light affliction transformed to exceeding glory?

We might mention other properties of the cedar. Like the palm, it is evergreen. Though a native of the mountains and used to wintry weather, it never sheds its leaves And these leaves, as well as its bark and wood, are aromatic. Even when the snow is loading its branches, the cedar is fragrant; but it is in those blessed and vernal days when snows are melting, when the April sun is lavishing his light and heat to the balmy air, and the whole life of the mountain is gushing through the opening flowers, and carolling birds and leaping lambs,—it is then that in the bursting of fresh foliage and in the flow of

beaded gums, the cedar loads the air with incense, and flings afar "the smell of Lebanon." And so a gracious soul is ever fresh, ever vital, ever green. But there are times when the winter is past and the Sun of Righteousness shines,—the April season of the soul; times when a whole tide of happy life flows into the dilating spirit, and the joy of Jesus circulates expansive and reviving through every opening faculty and enlarging grace. And it is then—then, when every twig of the cedar is tufted with new softness and beauty, and when the nestling birds are singing in the branches—it is then when the love of the Spirit circulates anew, and the soul exults in God its Saviour; it is then that it is good to be near the happy and fresh-filled believer. In such society, and at such a season, the atmosphere is odour. The south wind wakes, and the spices flow. Heaven has opened, and the winter fled. God smiles, and the soul expands. The Holy Spirit stirs within, and verdure mantles to the topmost bough. And in the wafted gladness and delicious air, every alert disciple feels "It is good to be here."

We might have added, the cedar is sound to the last; and the believer perseveres to the end, "to show that the Lord is upright; He is a rock, and there is no unrighteousness with Him." But we only mention one particular farther. The palm is most productive at the last. It brings forth in old age its largest, richest fruit. The cedar is most useful when dead. It is most productive when its place knows it no more. There is no timber like it. Firm in the grain, and capable of the finest polish, the tooth of no insect will touch it, and Time himself can hardly

destroy it. Diffusing a perpetual fragrance through the chambers which it ceils, the worm will not corrode the book which it protects, nor the moth corrupt the garment which it guards. All but immortal itself, it transfuses its amaranthine qualities to the objects around it; and however stately in the forest, or brave on the mountain's brow, it is more serviceable in Solomon's palace, and it receives an illustrious consecration when set up as pillars in the Temple, and carved into door-posts and lintels for the House of the Lord. Every Christian is useful in his life, but the goodly cedars are most useful afterwards. Joseph while he lived saved much people alive, and his own lofty goodness was an impressive and elevating pattern to his relenting and admiring brethren. But as an instance of special providence, and an example of untarnished excellence amidst terrible temptations, Joseph dead has spoken to more than Joseph living. The sweet singer of Israel while he lived taught many to handle the harp, and infected not a few with his thankful, adoring spirit. But David being dead yet singeth, and you can hardly name the psalm, or hymn, or spiritual song, of which the lesson was not learnt from the son of Jesse. Paul in his living day preached many a sermon, and made many a convert to the faith of Jesus. But Paul being dead yet preacheth, and they were sermons from his sepulchre which converted Luther, and Zuingle, and most of our modern evangelists. And Luther is dead, but the Reformation lives. Calvin is dead, but his vindication of God's free and sovereign grace will never die. Knox, Melville, and Henderson, are dead, but Scotland still retains a Sabbath

and a Christian peasantry, a Bible in every house, and a school in every parish. Bunyan is dead, but his bright spirit still walks the earth in his *Pilgrim's Progress.* Baxter is dead, but souls are still quickened by the *Saints' Rest,* and the *Call to the Unconverted.* Cowper is dead, but the "golden apples" are still as fresh as when newly gathered in the "silver basket" of the Olney Hymns. Eliot is dead, but the missionary enterprise is young. Henry Martyn is dead, but who can count the apostolic spirits, who, phœnix-wise, have started from his funeral pile? Howard is dead, but modern philanthropy is only commencing its career. Raikes is dead, but the Sabbath-schools go on. Wilberforce is dead, but the Negro will find for ages a protector in his memory.

And though you, Christian brother, may not occupy a place of prominence, you may fill a place of usefulness. If not a cedar of the mountain, you may be a cedar of the vale. Seek a clear understanding of scriptural truth. Be fully persuaded in your mind. See to it that a living Saviour be indeed the sun of your affections and the centre of your desires. Cultivate a strenuous piety. Alike combat intellectual laziness and spiritual lethargy. Be ready for every good work. Be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you. And pray that the Lord would maintain you ever ready for His providential will. Instead of yielding to every passing influence, seek a character so consistent, so meekly resolute, so cheerfully devout, that sin shall find no sanction in your silence, and irreligion no excuse in your gloom. And more especially among familiar friends and in your house at home, strive

to walk wisely in a perfect way. Begin and end the day with God. Let salt season your speech, and let Christian elevation pervade your demeanour. Let the peace of God rule in your heart, and let its power at once to strengthen and soften be seen in that majestic principle with which worldliness dares not to tamper, and that continual benignity which makes even worldliness wistful. And thus, when you yourself "grow" here no longer, even the irreligious will think of something very lofty and lovely when they think of you.

THE PALM.

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree."

DEAR READER,—You have named the name of Jesus. You have been led to avow yourself the Saviour's disciple. And, if sincere and intelligent in your profession, you are very different from the multitude, and from what you yourself once were. To you Christ is now a real person. You are persuaded that He is the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners. You believe that 1800 years ago He poured out His precious blood on a cross at Jerusalem, as an atonement for sin, and by His obedience to death brought in everlasting righteousness. You are assured that He is now at the Father's right hand, a Prince and a Saviour, bestowing repentance and the remission of sins. Your own hope is in Christ. You know not another name to which you can trust your eternal interests, but Christ Jesus you can and do rely on. And since you ascertained Christ's ability and willingness to save, there has been a change in your affections and hopes, your principles and habits. Your temperament may be cold; nevertheless, by you Christ is loved and adored. Your faith may be feeble and your prospects confused; still you have learned to recognise a Friend in Immanuel and a home in Heaven.

Your motives may be mixed and unstable; still your obedience is new, and you often find a holy impulse, a filial instinct, the joy of salvation or the love of Christ constraining you. Your character may be very defective; but still you can perceive that it is altered—for now you love to pray and read the Bible. You are happy among the excellent of the earth. The meditation of God is sweet, the day of God is welcome, and the house of God is dear. If a Christian at all, your case will be another fulfilment of the universal rule, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature."

But along with the hope of sincerity you may have a painful sense of deficiency. You feel that you are neither so happy nor so holy as a Christian might be. You would like to reach a character more explicit, a faith more firm, and an experience more vivid than are sought by ambiguous and commonplace professors. You perceive that it is a high mark which the Gospel sets before you, and that the consistent Christian is not only a new but a noble creature. But if such completeness and consistency of character be the objects of your desire, you should make them the subject of earnest thought and prayerful effort. With the Bible for a directory and the Holy Spirit for a teacher, there is nothing august and nothing amiable in vital Christianity which you may not long and hope to see developed in yourself. The Father is glorified when disciples are fruitful. The Church is strong when its members are mutual supports and incitements. And the Gospel spreads when living epistles commend it.

We have selected as mottoes two Scriptural emblems,

the Palm and the Cedar,—the one representing personal religion in its gracefulness, the other piety in its grandeur; the one, the beauty of true holiness, the other, its majesty: and both together the blessedness of its possessor and the benefits which he confers on others. Having already made a few remarks on the one, we now proceed to the other.

There is something instructive in the very place where the Palm-tree grows. It is not in the sheltered depths of the forest, nor with its roots struck deep in the fertile loam. It grows in the desert. All around the ridgy sand is burning, and often its pillar of verdure springs direct from the scorching dust. And it is in the desert that trees of righteousness grow. This earth is a land of emptiness. Its mould is not the soil from which you would expect aught spiritual or holy to spring. And when in a world like this—a world so sensual and depraved and so embittered against the living God,—when in such a world you alight on a man of blameless life and devout disposition and heavenly aspirations, it occasions the same surprise as encountering the bright and laden Palm on the desert's dusty edge. You may feel that your own is not the favourable place for cultivating personal piety. Your abode is not a cottage imbedded in the calm of rural Sabbaths, where the over-arching firmament or the leafy solitude invites you, Eden-wise, to communion with God. Your lot is not cast under the protective shadow of a domestic sanctuary, or amid the innocent safeguards and virtuous inspiration of a hallowed and godly home. You live in a city where the dust of business is drifting all the week, and the din of occupation disturbs the day of rest.

You are planted in a lonely lodging, or a prayerless household. And if your soul is to thrive at all, it must learn to "flourish" among strangers and scoffers. You must be a man of principle in the midst of profligacy, and a man of faith while surrounded with infidelity. "Thou, God, seest me!" must be inscribed in the dingy counting-room, and must move before you in letters of endearing light through the glare of the gas-lit mart. You must carry Bible rules into scenes of trickery and tumult, and must not suffer cunning men to beguile you of your simplicity, or knavish men to rob you of your equanimity. You must learn to be holy and harmless though in daily contact with duplicity, and must strive to lead Enoch's life: for, were Enoch living now, he would walk with God in the streets of London.

Though the Palm starts bolt up from the burning sand, the sand is not its sustenance. The dust may have swept hot and stifling round its stem;—but clear that dust away. The sand grows humid as you dig, and, by the time you reach the white fibres of the tap, the veins of water flow. And as, by and by, you gaze on the fringy rootlets floating in the well, you discern the secret of its joyous growth. No matter that the sky is brass and the desert dust, when crystal life is throbbing perennial and plentiful below. Doubtless this is a dry and thirsty land; but it is the land where ever and anon the eye is gladdened by some goodly Palm. In strange and unexpected places you meet with fresh and lofty Christians. You wonder how they thrive. They do not grow as the lily; for the lily is found in green pastures, and

they do not belong to a lifesome communion. Nor do they spring as the willow; for it springs by the water-courses, and they have not the benefit of the purest ordinances, and the most refreshful ministrations. They are trees of the desert, like Enoch among the giant sinners of an early world; like Joseph among the wizards and beast-worshippers of Egypt; like Daniel in voluptuous Babylon; like David Brainerd among Indian savages; like Henry Martyn in stony-hearted Persia. Their life is hid. So pure amidst depravity, so loyal to God amidst idolatry, so devout and fervent amidst atheism and blasphemy, their heavenly-mindedness is a miracle. But beneath the dusty surface of this godless world, there is a well of water springing up to everlasting life. There is no spot so barren, and no soil so burning, no place nor period so adverse, but faith can find the Holy Spirit there. It needs only faith's penetrating root descending beneath the things which do appear,[1] to fetch up spiritual refreshment and invigoration where others pine and die. From a secret source the believer in Jesus draws his life. The morning portion of the Word, the morning prayer, the morning meditation; these are the "stolen waters" which keep him green all day; and even in the desert there is a dew which, descending on his branches overnight, brings him forth fragrant and vegete to the morrow. You, my friend, who lead a life of secularity or drudgery,—you who are often sighing, "Lord, what a wretched land is this;" remember that it is the land of the Bible, the land of prayer, the land of the promises, and. above all, the land

[1] Heb. xi. 1.

of the Comforter's presence and power. To say nothing of periodic rains and weekly showers, the affluent irrigation of sanctified Sabbaths and communion feasts,—a daily text and daily prayer, with the whole heart in them, would make you flourish like the Palm. You would realize something of the life of God in your own soul, and your shining, healthful aspect would draw forth the exclamation, "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man whose strength is in thee."

The Palm is a tree of remarkable beauty. Apart from all its associations there is something in its slim uprightness, its verdant canopy, and the silvery flashes of its waving plumes, which glads the eye that gazes. And so is there in a person truly gracious. If your character be completely Christian; if there be in it so much of grace that the gracious has all grown natural; if your affections be brought obedient to Christ Jesus; if your maxims of conduct be scriptural, and your motives of action Christian, there will be instruction and joy in beholding you. Your growth will be erect and aspiring. The ivy creeps and the bramble trails, but the Palm, in its perpendicular uprightness, dwells on high, and seeks the things above. And the fairest Christians are those whose pure and lofty affections lift them sublimely above all that is low and debasing, and whose heaven-pointing demeanour betokens an upgoing heart. Whosoever is anxious to become a consistent and conspicuous Christian, must keep aloof from the mean enjoyments and paltry expedients, the tattling curiosity and malignant constructions, of a world incredulous of the highest goodness, because incapable of exerting it; and, aware that no permanent motive to well-

doing can be found here below, he must seek it in that Saviour whose smile it elicits, and in that Heaven where it all shall be found again. Some trees are crooked, but the Palm is straight, and, standing forth in its unbending altitude, spreads all its foliage to the sun. And, if yours be a flourishing Christianity, there will be no crooks nor zigzags in it. A conscience void of offence will give a gay security to your goings out and comings in. Never meeting the neighbour whom you have injured, nor the man who has aught ignominious to allege against you; haunted by no sense of hollowness, and no forebodings for the future; harbouring no bitter feelings, and hiding no sinister designs, you will readily come to the light, and never fear that it will make your deeds too manifest. And just as your frank, explicit character will declare you a child of day, your evenly sense and the sweetness of your disposition will justify you as one of Wisdom's children. There are trees which have knots of weakness in their substance, and gnarled projections on their surface. But the Palm is not only erect and tall; its stem is fair and even. From the root to the topmost tuft, it springs round, elegant, and equal, with neither galls nor disfiguring bunches. There are crotchety Christians; but they are not palms. There are professors so peculiar that you can never count on them; what they are to-day is no presumption for what they shall be to-morrow. They may have many good points and noble qualities; but their fellowship is marred, and their usefulness frustrated, by whims which no sagacity can predict, and caprices to which not even "the patience of the saints" can conform.

Christian reader, cultivate a meek and quiet spirit; that magnanimity which is calm and considerate, and which tries to look at this day's grievances in to-morrow's light; that elastic and happy temper which, being the growth of grace, shall be independent of the weather,—that serenity which, whether in fog, or sickness, or hunger, or in sunshine, and health, and bodily comfort, "is not easily provoked;" that "charity which suffereth long and is kind, which hopeth all things, endureth all things." And if this grace be in you,—if your spirit be so ruled that men find you the same yesterday and to-day,—your heart fixed amidst vexations, and amidst all its trials your temper tranquil, they will perceive that the religion from above is full of good fruits, and will admire its peaceful fruits in you.

Nor must we forget that foliage which is one chief glory of the palm. Each several frond in its graceful arching, and its long and taper leaflets, with the gloss of unfading verdure, is such a natural symbol of hope and joy and exultation, that the palm-branch has stood for ages the emblem of victory. It was twisted into the verdant booths at the Feast of Tabernacles; it was borne aloft by the multitude when they escorted Messiah to His coronation in Jerusalem. "And lo! before the throne in heaven, and before the Lamb, a great multitude, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."[1] Every believer should flourish like the palm. Not only should "his leaf never fade,"[2] it should not even sully. Some leaves are so viscid and clammy, that the dust settles and adheres. And some professors, who perhaps are genuine,

[1] Rev. vii. 9. [2] Psalm i. 3.

are so powdered over with a constant secularity that their leaf is always dingy. They are wayfaring trees; and if the shower of some special ordinance or solemnizing dispensation should wash their foliage into a momentary freshness, the cares of this life soon deface it again. But in the heart of the desert the palm contrives to cast the dust quick as it alights, and keeps its slender leaflets pure. And so, Christian brethren, be it your endeavour to maintain not only a blameless, but a beauteous character, the full circulation and the fresh attire of a flourishing Christianity. You must go into the world to-morrow. You must do many dull and irksome things, or many things apparently remote from religion. But if you have found out the secret of spiritual-mindedness, you will come home fit for the prayer-meeting, or for the Christian friend, or the family worship. In the midst of all the secularities which have been floating around, you will keep your garments clean. The palm has no holiday clothing. Its branch is equally green whether an emperor or an outlaw pass under it. Summer and winter it is always the same. And so a beauteous Christianity is that which loses none of its loveliness to the eye that oftenest views it. If you be respectable in public,—if you be serious and fervent in the sanctuary,—if your conversation be rational or religious in society:—but if you be commonplace at home,—if you be cross and censorious, frivolous and silly, worldly and wearisome at your own fireside,—if you be one of those trees which need brushing before they are fit to be seen, such dusty affinities prove that your nature is not that of the palm. If

full of sap, your leaf will be ever green; and those who know you best will love you most, and be the best persuaded of your simplicity and godly sincerity. And to crown the whole: if yours be a palmy growth, yours will be a religion of happiness and praise. A fair sight it is when the breeze flits by, and every ray of the feathery coronet twinkles to the morning sun,—the desert's anthem,—the palm-tree's orison. Nature gave the hint to man, and to God's glory waved her verdant plumes before the victor learned to wave them to his own. And so, dear friend, if yours be the right religion, it will be imbued with blessedness and clothed with praise. You "will be fat and flourishing," "to show that the Lord is upright." Through the greatness of His work your heart will be made right glad. His greatest work, redemption, will often swell in upon your spirit with new surprise, and the Christ that is yours, and the Comforter that is yours, and the heaven which is soon to be yours, will bear back your waking glory into astonished silence and heart-murmured adoration; and lesser gifts, less, but most precious, will be a sweet relief to the overmastering emotion; and, by giving outlet to the gratitude, you will sanctify the gift and seal it in sacredness and sweet memorial on your own soul. Habitual faith will give perennial cheerfulness. If "fat" you will be "flourishing." The peace of God within will force off the withered twigs of care and foreboding and worldly-mindedness, and give you the daily freshness of one careful for nothing. "I am now," writes one, "near the end of my warfare. I never had such a variety of affairs to manage as a man in

so much business as yourself, but I had a large young family very dear to me, and not enough for their maintenance from year to year; and, in case of my death, they were to be destitute. I was, however, wonderfully free and cheerful in my heart. I think I should not have been more so, if I had been without a child. My preservative was wholly this: 'He that hath the Son hath life.' A full and powerful conviction of this truth was attended with constant prayer for them and myself, that we might have this one thing needful, which by this means grew in price and value. Was Christ enough for peace, comfort, and joy to the first Christians; and is He not now the same? Will He not be enough for me and my children?" And to like purport writes another: "Yesterday I was very much taken up in house affairs. Various things occurred which would at some times have been a burden, but everything seemed blest. These words were all day the language of my heart—

> 'With thee conversing I forget
> All time, and toil, and care;
> Labour is rest, and toil is sweet,
> If thou, my God, be there.'"

Few trees can equal the Palm in absolute usefulness. Its shadow refreshes the weary traveller. Its sweet and abundant fruit restores his strength. And when his soul faileth him for thirst, its welcome telegraph announces, Here is water. The lighthouse of the wilderness, nature's simple hostelry, its beacon has darted life into many a glassy eye, and has forwarded to the home, which he hardly hoped to see again, many a sinking wanderer;—

so that glad associations and grateful offices have gone far to enhance its beauty. And in the tender mercy of God there are distributed through the Church of Christ, and consequently through the world, many persons who, in beneficence, flourish like the palm. To do good and communicate they never forget. They cannot avoid it. It is now spontaneous with them, for God gave them the disposition when He gave them their new nature. Like a cool shadow in a scorching day, their counsel revives the perplexed, and their sympathy cheers the sad. Like the clustering dates ungrudgingly showered on the passenger, their generosity and hospitality are a boon to all who need them. And like the palm-tree pointing to the hidden well, their sure direction guides the weary seeker to the Fountain where he drinks and lives for ever. Such a one was Barnabas, the Son of Consolation, in whose large heart and tender wisdom, afflicted consciences and wounded spirits found the balm which healed them, "a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost." And such were Gaius, and Aquila, and Lydia, and Dorcas, whose willing roof and untiring bounty made churches their debtors, and who found in the prayers of the poor their payment. And such was Philip the Evangelist, who put the timely question to the Ethiopian, and business-like and brother-like sat down in the chariot beside him, and pointed out so plain that way to heaven which the earnest stranger was so fain to find. And such in later times have been many of the Church Universal's worthies: Bernard Gilpin, whose open hand and inviting door softened towards the Gospel the rude heart of Northumberland; John

Thornton, of whom it was remarked, "Were there but a thousand loving Christians of great opulence like-minded with him, the nation would be convinced of the good operation of the Gospel;" William Wilberforce, who, in addition to countless acts of considerate philanthropy, sought out and sent to college young men of principle and promise, and saw his liberality rewarded when they became judges of the land, and distinguished ministers of the Gospel; Howell Harris, who filled his Trevecca mansion with scores of disabled and destitute Christians, and amidst the tears of a hundred adopted children, passed away to that beloved Saviour whom hungry he fed, and a stranger he had taken in;[1] Mrs. Fletcher of Madeley, who devoted her long widowhood to prayer and active kindness, and re-peopled her desolate home with orphans and the pious poor; John Newton, whose dusky Coleman-street chamber shone with a heavenly radiance in many a memory, for there, amid his affectionate explanations, the cross stood out to their tearful view, and for the first time they learned to find in a Saviour's side the double refuge from sin and from sorrow. And such in your place and your measure may each of you who are Christians at all, aspire to become. "Herein is the Father glorified that ye bear *much* fruit." Kind looks, kind words, kind deeds, advice thoughtfully and honestly given, trouble cheerfully taken, visits to the sick and the mourning, when your heart goes with you and you are in a mood for prayer, gifts of your substance, large enough to make you interested in the cause to which you contri-

[1] Matt. xxv. 35, 40.

bute, and intercessions as earnest as these gifts are cordial: such are true fruits of righteousness; such are the genuine produce of a thriving Palm.

And not to enlarge too much, we merely notice the circumstance that this interesting tree is productive to the last, and brings forth its best fruit in old age. The best dates are said to be gathered when it has reached a hundred years. So is it with eminent Christians: the older the better; the older the more beautiful; nay, the older the more useful; and, different from worldlings, the older the happier. The best Christians are those who improve to the end, who grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ to the very close of life. They loved Him at first, but now they love Him more. At first they were selfish, and only sought to escape from wrath; now they are jealous of the Saviour's honour, and long to be saved from sin. At first they only thought of the Priest; now they perceive the Priest upon a throne, and love not only the Saviour's cross, but the Saviour's yoke and the Saviour's laws. One Jesus is their King. And they grow in knowledge of themselves. The truth to which they once assented becomes a deep-wrought experience. "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." And the discovery of this depravity, the knowledge how debased and worthless their nature has become, instead of making them morose and bitter towards their fellow-sharers in the fall, makes them lenient and considerate. They know themselves too well to expect perfection in their friends, and find brethren to whom they can stick close in the face of obvious failings;

and even when they hear of awful wickedness, indignation is chastened by compassion and humility. It is something of the old Reformer's feeling when he saw the malefactor led to prison:—"There, but for the grace of God, goes John Bradford." And they grow in wisdom. Long experience, and still more "the secret of the Lord," dispassionate observation and heavenly-mindedness, have given them sagacity; and sometimes in homely adages, sometimes in direct and sober counsel, they deal forth that mellow wisdom. And they grow in spirituality. We have seen those aged pilgrims to whom earthly things at last grew insipid; they had no curiosity for the news of the day, and little taste for fresh and entertaining books. They stuck to God's testimonies, and you never went in to see them but the ample Bible lay open on the table or the counterpane; and they could tell the portion which had been that morning's food, or the meditation of the previous night. The Word of God dwelt in them so richly that you could see they were becoming fit to dwell with God; for when a mind has become thoroughly scriptural, it wants but another step to make it celestial. And the last harvest came, and the last gleanings of their precious words, and when next we went that way their place knew them no longer. They were flourishing in the courts of God's house on high, and we should sit under their shadow and be regaled by their goodness no more. But when we recollected how fair their Christian profession was, how beneficent and serviceable they had ever been, and remembered that their last days were their brightest, and their last fruits their fairest, we said over

to ourselves, "The righteous shall flourish like the Palm-tree. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to show that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."

Dear Christian Reader, when your own ear cannot hear it, may this be your eulogy; when your own eye cannot read it, may this be your epitaph. In the meanwhile, for the sake of that Saviour who is dishonoured by proud and selfish and unlovely disciples, do you strive and pray for consistency. And for your own soul's sake, which is dulled by defective views and depressed by each besetting sin, do you seek a serene and lofty faith, do you covet earnestly a blameless conversation. Let your triumphs over self and high-hearted zeal for the Saviour, let the largeness of your spirit and your heavenly elevation, let the exuberance of your goodness and the multitude of its special acts, let the fulness of your affections and the freshness of your feelings, and the abundance of your beneficence, make the Christian manifest and unmistakable. Let your happy piety be the far-eyed signal announcing an Oasis in the Desert, and pray that your Church or congregation may become to weary pilgrims another Elim, where when they came they found "twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten Palm-trees."

THE GARDEN ENCLOSED.

"A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse,
A spring shut up, a fountain sealed.
A paradise of pomegranates are thy productions,
Of delicious fruits, cypress, and spikenard,
Spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon,
With all trees of frankincense;
Myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices,
A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters,
Streams from Lebanon.
Awake, O North wind, come, thou South,
Blow upon my garden, that the spices may flow out:
That my beloved may come into his garden,
And eat its pleasant fruits."

CHRIST has a garden. There are flowers to be found in the wilderness; but when in the hedgerow or on the mountain-side you find a plant of rare beauty, it is your instant impulse to fetch it home. You want to have it near at hand, where you can see it every day; and so you transplant it. You take it to your garden, and in the shady nook or on the open parterre, you give it a new home,—the place where it is likely to thrive and blossom best.

And so, there have occasionally existed solitary saints. Like Joseph in Egypt, like Lot in Sodom, there have from time to time flourished in unlikely places trees of righteousness:—such as Thomas à Kempis inditing his

Imitation of Christ in the midst of coarse and lazy friars,—or that monk of Mount Ararat whom Henry Martyn found walking with God amidst the superstition and grossness of an Armenian convent. And just as the florist is filled with rapture when in some unexpected region he alights on a specimen superb in its glory, and for the moment deems it quite matchless,—so, when in the dry places of Church History or in the dreary expanse of secular society, we chance to encounter a fervent believer, in the gladness of surprise and in the contrast with all around we feel as if his beauty were peerless, and as if no culture could compete with the freshness and fulness of his free and Heaven-fostered development.

But it is the will of Christ that His people should dwell together; and for this purpose He has provided that sacred enclosure, the Christian Church. Fenced round, so as to exclude the boar of the forest and the mischievous spoiler,—its generous soil is kept clear of weeds, and in graceful groups and mutually-sustaining adjustments God plants His people there in families. And if even among thorns the lily was fair,—if even on the open heath the thyme and the myrtle shed exquisite odour,—that lily is lovelier now as it stands amongst gentle companions who do not tarnish or tear it, and the fragrance of these gentle refugees is richer as it comes and goes amidst the blended joy of all the incense-breathing summer.

This garden is fenced. It is a "garden enclosed." Around it is the wall of fire, the Divine protection; and the more visible wall of human demarcation and eccle-

siastical discipline. In every age God has protected and preserved His people; and even in the days of fiercest persecution—when it looked as if the hedge were entirely broken down and the wild beast might devour it at his pleasure,—even then in some Roman catacomb or Cœlesyrian valley or Waldensian fastness, God hid His remnant and kept up a seed to serve Him. And for the better conservation of true religion, He has appointed a government in His Church. He has intrusted it to those whose business is to tend it and keep it; and whilst they do their best to root out immorality and error, they are also to do their utmost to foster weak faith and restore infirmity,—binding up the bruised reed, restraining the extravagant off-shoot, and restoring to its right place the wayward shoot which quits the supporting espalier.

In this garden there is great variety. There are plants famous for their beauty, and others for their medicinal virtues; some that are prized for their delightful perfume, and others for their "pleasant fruits." Not only is it an orchard of pomegranates, with its avenues of cypress, but there are spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, trees of frankincense, and all the chief spices. It is man that creates monotony. It is man that fills a garden with a repetition of the self-same vegetation. It is man that clothes entire communities in grey, or drab, or russet, and who tries to reach perfection by making each the facsimile of his fellow. But, like the great Creator, the new-creating Spirit loves variety; and in the Church of Christ there is room for characters as diverse as the rustic Amos and the imperial Solomon, as Moses so meek and

much-enduring, and Paul so self-asserting and so spirited, as John so ethereal and contemplative, and James so homely and so practical. And just as we see in a garden a whole plat devoted to a favourite flower, a border where none but carnations or verbenas bloom, so within the great enclosure of Christ's own Church, are many distinct communities,—"churches," as we call them, but in reality only so many clumps or denominations within the one great Church; and to the eye which is not entirely wedded to a particular tint or pattern, there is a beauty in the groups which bring richly together distinctive attributes; —in Presbyterian order and Wesleyan fervour, in Congregational liberty and Anglican obedience, in Moravian devotedness and Quaker contentment, in the godliness which makes the Lutheran so happy and endearing in the life that now is, and which fixes the Calvinist so sublimely on the life that is to come. And as with communities, so with individual members; there is boundless and beautiful variety. There are flowers so fair that whilst you eye them, you kindle up and become for the moment a brighter, sunnier man; and between the leaves of your Bible or memorandum-book you treasure up one blossom of the heath or the heart's-ease to recall that vision of delight. And there are flowers so fragrant that though you care not to take their picture,—like the myrrh or the spikenard, they have no peculiar grace nor any brilliancy of bloom,—you love the spot they haunt, and as you pass there comes over your spirit a visitation soft and soothing, which you scarcely notice for the moment, but which makes you bless their memory. And so there are

lovely characters,—Christians whom it does you good to look upon; whose beauty of holiness beautifies the beholder, so that in their presence he is actually a more generous or unworldly man; and quotable Christians,—men whose good deeds or edifying words you can chronicle, so that long after they are gone you can still open the biographic record and recall in unfaded freshness the trait of goodness or the word in season. And there are fragrant characters. You can scarcely define their excellence; you cannot quote their brilliant sayings, and their deeds do not make anecdotes; and yet such a sweet savour of Christ surrounds them, and with such an atmosphere of love and goodness do they fill their daily sphere, that the nooks to which memory loves to fly back and nestle are the bowers which they gladdened, and the homes which they blessed by the perpetual June of their presence. But besides the beautiful and the fragrant,—the characters which shed over the Church's face its loveliness, and which fill its precincts with a heavenly charm, there are the fruitful,—"the pomegranates and pleasant fruits,"—the men to whose substantial services, to whose thoughtful kindnesses, and generous deeds, and systematic labours, the world is so much indebted:—Gaius mine host, Tryphena and Tryphosa who labour in the Lord,—the evangelists who go everywhere preaching the Word,—the teachers who spend and are spent in our week-day and Sunday schools —the Dorcas who makes garments for the poor,—the landed proprietor or the private citizen, who visits from house to house, and who endeavours to elevate in intelligence and moral worth the poor and depressed around

him. And although less popular, by no means unimportant, are the bitter herbs, the antidotes and tonics, which also find a place : for there is need for myrrh and aloes as well as roses and lilies. We may not like the sharp reprover, the stern and uncompromising reformer, so well as the mild and bright-beaming philanthropist ; and yet that reprover may be the truest benefactor ; and there would be little scope for the philanthropist, if he had not as his pioneer the energetic reformer. It is sad ignorance of the requirements of human nature to disparage men who fulfilled so great a function as Latimer and Knox, as Cartwright and Melville, as Clarkson and the Haldanes : —men who in their loyalty to Truth forfeited much present popularity, and who kept up the Church's tone by the comforts they renounced and the sacrifices they endured in striving against error and sin.

These plants so various and so pleasant owe their vitality and vigour to the "fountain of gardens :"—and this fountain is called both "a well of living waters" and "streams from Lebanon." Even in our own isle, with all its clouds and vapours, there is sometimes danger lest the garden be burnt up ; and when the leaves hang flaccid on the newly-planted shrub, and when delicate blossoms shrivel up, refusing to open to the scorching beam ; as soon as the sun has set, you go to the brook or the fountain and lave the roots with a plentiful libation : and then when the morrow dawns, the leaves spread out so broad and firm, and the reviving blossoms look up and thank you with a smile. But in sultrier lands they do not even trust to this. In the gardens of Damascus you may see

so many channels digged, and along them all a little rill meandering, and conveying to the foot of each pomegranate or orange-tree the streams from Lebanon,—the very river which has melted from the snowy peaks, and which, after refreshing the tall cedars, now comes down to these sultry plains and converts their dusty expanse into an earthly paradise. These world-famed orchards do not depend on any tank or pond; but they drink "living water," and convert into cool shadow and delicious fruits the liquid treasure which the friendly mountain has hoarded since last winter.

The fountain of Christ's garden is the means of grace. A believer droops. In that corner of the garden where he is planted the soil is thin. It is a thirsty land where his lot is cast,—a land where Christian society is rare, or where the preaching of the Word is vague and vapid. And the good man feels it. His religion shrivels. The men by whose fervour he was wont to be roused or overawed, he now begins to regard as fanatics; and the good objects in which he was once so hearty,—missions to the heathen and reformatory institutions,—he begins to call Utopian visions and a useless waste of money. But still there is a little root of spiritual vitality, and as there comes into the region an earnest ministry, or as there settles in his neighbourhood a large-hearted and much-loving Christian friend, his feelings begin to freshen. There is a shudder through the depths of his being as when death re-awakens into life; and shocked at his backslidings,—remembering whence he has fallen, he repents and does the first works. And as he begins to distribute tracts and teach a Sunday

class, and take an interest in the surrounding cottagers, people would almost fancy that this was the zeal of a young convert;—they would scarcely suppose that it was the revival of an expiring life,—a return to first love on the part of an Ephesian backslider.

It is dry and dusty weather. The life which the Christian is constrained to lead is much of it too secular. His business takes him chiefly among worldly men, and at times he cannot help being exceedingly engrossed. Trade is precarious, the times are pressing, or he has set on foot a series of experiments, he has struck out a good idea, or commenced a line of traffic with which his mind is busy day and night. And he can hardly disguise it that the true treasure is dwindling, his soul is declining. But just then he is laid prostrate by sickness, or death enters his dwelling; he falls in with some remarkable book, or hears a rousing sermon; and as he reads, and listens, and ponders, he is amazed at his own languor, and yielding to the providential admonition he renews his diligence in practical piety. The things unseen come to his spirit in closer contact, his prayers acquire a new fulness, precision, and sincerity, his watchfulness over himself is resumed, and the brightening up of all his piety betokens a secret source of refreshing.

But better than this dependence on such supplies as are brought from the cistern, is the case of the man who is "planted by the rivers of water," whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who makes it his habitual meditation. In other words, that piety is likely to be the most persistent and most progressive where the appointed means

of grace are statedly employed. The Word of God, the day of rest, the house of prayer, reading, meditation, worship, secret and social,—these are the chief of the ordinary means. These are the channels along which the streams from Lebanon are conveyed to every tree in the garden :—the truths and thoughts which, born in the calm pure regions overhead, flow along down the valley of Revelation, and which when filled and penetrated by the Spirit of God become "living water." By far the most satisfactory Christians,—the most abiding and most growthful, are those who are most steadfast in the use of these stated means ; who gladly go up to the house of the Lord, who command their household and their children after them to keep His ways, who do not restrain prayer in secret, who are much and mighty in the Scriptures, and who when they meet with those who love the Lord prize the opportunity to speak together and to call upon His name :—not only will their leaf not wither, and not only will what they produce come to perfection, but should it please the Lord to send a season of refreshing they are the likeliest to profit by the plenteous rain.

Such, viewed by the Saviour, is His Church. Such is the combination of beneficence and beauty, of fragrance and fruitfulness, produced by the good Spirit of God, and brought together in the sacred enclosure of the Christian Church. And such is the Saviour's complacency in viewing the varied excellence of this redeemed and regenerate community.

> "My bride ! my love ! in thee perfection meets :
> A garden art thou, filled with matchless sweets ;

A garden walled, those matchless sweets to shield:
A spring enclosed, a fountain fresh and sealed;
A paradise of plants, where all unite,
Dear to the smell, the palate, or the sight;
Of rich pomegranates, that at random blow;
Cypress and nard in fragrant gales that flow;
Nard, saffron, cinnamon,—the dulcet airs
Deep through its canes the calamus prepares;
The scented aloes, and each shrub that showers
Gums from its veins, and spices from its flowers.
O pride of gardens! fount of endless sweets!
Well-spring of all in Lebanon that meets."[1]

Which brings us to the closing prayer, "Awake, O North wind!" Clouds chill the sky. Over the garden, over the soul of the believer, hangs a gloomy pall of indifference, estrangement, or error. He is not loving God. He sees no beauty in Christ why he should desire Him. There is no sun in the firmament, no light from the Saviour's countenance, no attraction in the cross, nothing to stir or expand his soul. But "clear weather cometh out of the North country;" and, like the North wind waking, the Holy Spirit breathes,—and not from the face of the sun but from the face of the garden, from the soul of the disciple, He blows away the intercepting cloud, and lets the Sun of Righteousness shine through; Divine realities are again discerned, the closed petals open, faith revives, and the recognising blossom smiles back to the kindly firmament. There is light, knowledge, truth apprehended, the Gospel anew discovered:—there is "clear weather." But a cloudless sky is not sufficient. In a hard frost we have seen a crimson rose-bud gazing to the

[1] Mason Good.

sun, yet it shed no fragrance through the clear but icy atmosphere; and in order to convert the blossom into balm, to cheer April into June, we cry, "Come, thou South wind:" now that the North has chased the clouds of darkness and unbelief, and cleared the sky, "come, thou South," and with thy kind solvent melt my heart. "Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." Coming warm from the land of love,—coming from the regions of unreserved benevolence and enraptured adoration,—coming from that realm of happiness and praise which enjoys the perennial sunshine of Christ's presence, the Holy Spirit brings with Him the true summer of the soul. Faith He sublimes to full assurance, and conviction He quickens into cheerful activity, and principle, elaborated into holy feeling and fervid emotion He causes to flow forth, as spices do,—a beatific atmosphere around the heavenly man. And from a church full of such members the fragrance overflows and surprises the passer-by. For though the garden is enclosed, the breeze is not confined: and, blowing where he listeth, the South wind sometimes wafts the spicy odour far forth into the outside world. Yes, the world is the better,—the happier for that Church which God has "enclosed" in its midst. Faith in God, the hope full of immortality, some connexion between this world and heaven, the beauty of holiness, the charms of disinterested benevolence,—were it not for that standing Church the world would hardly know such things: but going like

"An incense through the midnight land,"

even though the garden itself be veiled, and they be

sleepers whom the exquisite odour visits, it infuses pleasant thoughts into their dreams; and waking, some have not been able to forget the exquisite sensation, and, searching for its source, their own steps have been guided into the Garden Enclosed.

HARVEST HOME.

THE earth is full of God's goodness, and so is every season. Spring, with its opening blossoms, its exquisite odours, its suggestions of "good things not seen as yet;" and Summer, with "healing in its wings," with its balmy breezes, with its plenitude of life, and its placid consciousness of power,—each is a witness for Him whose name is Love. But the "fruitful season" is a witness still plainer, and one which speaks to the intelligence of all mankind. And, indeed, each contributes a several item in the testimony to the great Creator. For, if Spring says, "How great is His beauty!" and Summer, "How great His benevolence!" pointing to the rustling sheaf and the laden bough, says Autumn, "And how great is His bounty!"

Every season is a preacher, but of them all we are inclined to think Autumn the most popular and impressive. It needs no acquaintance with Nature's mysteries to understand his sermon; it needs no peculiar susceptibility to be carried along by his direct and homely eloquence. In the field which he is reaping the unlettered rustic sees the answer to the fourth petition of his daily

prayer, and the Christian philosopher sees his heavenly Father giving bread to himself and his children, as plainly as if it were sent by the hand of an angel, or rained through a window in heaven. And whilst the purport of the discourse is so obvious, it is spoken to great advantage. Around there is little to distract, whilst there is much to fix the thoughts, to open the ear, and soothe the spirit. Autumn is the sabbath of the months; and with its mellow light and listening silence, the whole land seems consecrated into a temple hushed and holy. Nor is there lack of ministers. The laden trees are priests, the corn-fields are choristers; and, yielding to the tranquil influence, if you yourself be devoutly silent, their psalm will come into your soul:—

"So Thou the year most lib'rally
Dost with Thy goodness crown,
And all Thy paths abundantly
On us drop fatness down.

They drop upon the pastures wide,
That do in deserts lie;
The little hills on every side
Rejoice right pleasantly.

With flocks the pastures clothed be,
The vales with corn are clad;
And now they shout and sing to Thee,
For Thou hast made them glad."

To a mind that sees God in everything there is a special "joy in harvest." It is a new pledge of Jehovah's faithfulness:—another accomplishment of that ancient promise, "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest shall not cease;"—a promise made all the more

striking by the incidents which imperilled its fulfilment; —the winter that looked as if it would never go away, perhaps the drought which threatened to scorch the seed in the baked and burning furrow; perhaps the cold skies which forbade the ear to fill, or the drenching floods, which, when filled, dashed it to the earth again;—but past all these perils, or through them all, a mighty Providence has borne the sustenance of a world, and, as it spans the clouds of the dissolving equinox, the rainbow asks on behalf of the great Covenant-maker, "Hath one word failed of all that God hath spoken?" And so it proclaims the loving-kindness of the Lord, the care and munificence of the great Provider. It is not a mere subsistence He secures to the children of men, but it is a feast of fat things; not only the bread which strengthens man's heart, but the wine that makes him glad, and the oil that makes his face to shine,—all the variety of fruits, and grains, and herbs, and spices; not bread for the children only, but crumbs for the creatures under the table. Nor at this season can we fail to mark the minuteness of forethought and munificence of kindness with which our heavenly Father feeds the fowls of the firmament; the profusion which not only fills the barn of the husbandman, but which, in every forest and every hedgerow, has a store-house for those pensioners of His who can take no thought for the morrow. With its banquet-hall so wide and so populous, with its heaps of abundance, and its air of open-handed welcome, Harvest is the season which tells us of God's hospitality.

Besides the palpable Providence,—the visible nearness

of a God most gracious and merciful,—a material element in the joy of harvest is the reward of industry.

If the sleep of the labouring man is sweet, so is that labourer's bread. The fields are bare: the year's work is done: and as he nestles among the sheaves, so glossy, dry, and fragrant; as he surveys the golden heap, fresh-sifted on the threshing-floor; as he watches the snowy powder flowing from between the revolving cylinders: as he sits down with his rosy children to the household loaf, that bread has to him a flavour which no science can impart,—those sheaves have a grace and a beauty which no pencil can reproduce, for no artist can espy. That bread has the pleasant flavour of personal industry: that garner concentres in itself a year of his own toil-worn history. And now in the snug comfort of his cottage, and amidst rainy gusts prophetic of winter, it calls up to complacent memory the frosty morning when by lantern-light he yoked his team,—the grey and windy noon when he sowed the seed,—the day when to save the tender crop and the crumbling furrows, he battled with the swollen brook and banked out the thunder-torrent;—the weary nights when he waked so often, and from the dripping eaves and gurgling corbels presaged rotten shocks or flattened fields: and now that all these anxieties and toils are ended, and now that the Most High has given these results to his labour, he that went forth weeping bearing precious seed, comes again rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him.

And the analogy goes up, and upward still, from that rejoicing peasant to the Christian parent who reaps his

prayer and efforts in the salvation of his child:—up to the Christian patriot who, after all the ebbs and flows of popular favour, is rewarded with the extinction of an evil, or the reformation of a realm:—up to the missionary who after a ten years' sowing, sees coming in the first-fruits of Greenland or Tahiti unto Christ:—up to the martyr who from beneath the Heavenly Altar looks down,—Cranmer on his England, Huss and Jerome on their Prague, Wishart on his Scotland, and from his ashes sees a mighty Church upsprung and flourishing:—upward and upward yet to that King of Martyrs and Prince of Missionaries who from his thirty years of husbandry among the hills of Galilee, when His head was filled with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night,—who, from the handful of corn which He then planted in the earth, and at last watered with His blood, already sees fruit that shakes like Lebanon, and who, when at length the harvest of the earth is ripe and Heaven's garner has received the last of His redeemed, shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

But there are solemn words in Autumn's sermon. He says, "Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

We see the earnest even now. He that sows to the flesh,—he who spends his property or his talents in self-indulgence, in idolatrous vanities, in that cruel luxury which is deaf to the cry of misery, in gratifying the

coarser appetites and passions of this fallen nature,—of the flesh he reaps corruption. His harvest is a heart constantly contracting. His harvest is often a shortened life or a shattered intellect:—a body prematurely blighted and a mind that loses susceptibilities and powers which once lost can never come again. His harvest is more and more of that corruption which he sows,—sin added to sin,—the habit of evil strengthened,—a growing remoteness from virtue and happiness, because a growing proneness to evil and a growing powerlessness against temptation.

And he that soweth to the Spirit, even before he reaps "life everlasting"—see how rich is his intermediate recompense! From that dependent spirit of his and from those devotional habits, see how large is his harvest of peace and serenity! Amidst tumult and agitation see how fixed is his heart, trusting in the Lord: and amidst the flaming shower of each day's temptations, burning into the souls of many, and leaving dark scars on the conscience, see how on his panoply of faith the sparks die out unperceived and harmless! From that God-fearing spirit of his, see how large is the harvest of social respect and personal security! what a fund of confidence and honour has accumulated from those early acts of self-denial, or from one deed of courageous honesty! what a fortune has been founded on a single commandment tenaciously remembered and constantly observed! And from that benevolent spirit of his, see how large is his harvest of love and gratitude! What music is in his name, what a continual comfort in his presence! See

how all hearts open towards his, as instinctively as they close on the approach of others; and see how he inherits the earth,—a meek but universal monarch carrying captive the whole community, and reigning by love in souls which swords and sceptres fail to reach, and which even genius cannot conquer!

But this is only a faint foreshadowing of that final and exhaustless harvest which is to follow this earthly seed-time: for although salvation is all of grace, yet, compatibly with its entire gratuitousness, we know that in this life He who gives grace for grace is pleased to acknowledge the services of His believing people, for the sake of that Saviour in whose strength they are wrought, and to whose joy their recompense adds; and if in this life, why not also in the life to come? And in somewhat the same sense as reaping is the reward of sowing, we are taught that gracious habits, formed and cherished on earth, shall find their consummation in the still higher and holier products of eternity—whilst the self-denial implied in their culture will be infinitely overbalanced and requited in the joys of the life everlasting.

Think of this, you that are well-nigh weary of well-doing:—you that stand alone in a godless household, and who sometimes grow disheartened amidst the coldness, and the opposition, and the jeering:—you who have enlisted under Christ's banner, but who, if you have not actually forsaken house and lands for His sake, have at least felt constrained to let pass many a golden opportunity:—you who have been for years watching for a soul, if haply you might win it, and who still see it as

far from the kingdom as ever:—you who have long been contending with a wicked temper or an unholy passion, and who dare not say that you have gained any sensible advantage over it—oh, be not weary! Think of the joy of harvest. Think of the day when you shall rest from your labours, and these works shall follow you. Think of the day,—the humbling, affecting, overwhelming day, when the cup of cold water will reappear as an ingredient in the everlasting glory. Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season you shall reap if you faint not.

Yet be not deceived. God is not mocked. He that soweth to the flesh shall have his harvest also. Darnel grows as well as wheat, and thistles as well as barley. The awards of eternity are not the inflictions of arbitrary power, but they are the legitimate products, the prolongations, and out-workings of the present: a harvest corresponding to the seed-time: so righteous, so congruous under the government of a just God, so inevitable that the sinner feels, if he does not confess, that the sentence is just. Reader, be not deceived. Let not that day, that harvest day of sorrow, come on you as a thief—that day when he who showed judgment without mercy shall receive judgment without mercy—that day when he who wrought abomination and made a lie shall find himself excluded from those pearly gates through which nothing enters that defileth—that day when he who used to say to God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways," shall hear God say to him, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity: I never knew you."[1] Be not

[1] Works of Andrew Fuller, vol. vii. p. 140.

deceived. God is not mocked. This must be the way of it. Sin will result in sorrow: carnality will reap corruption. So entreat of God for the Redeemer's sake to cancel that guilty past—to exterminate the crop of guilt and crime, so that it shall not seed itself in further evil, nor be treasured up as wrath against the day of wrath. Break off your sins by repentance, and from their fearful consequences take refuge in a Saviour's intercession. And beg earnestly for God's good Spirit, that you too, taught, led, and quickened by the Spirit, may of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

THE AMARANTH: OR, IMMORTALITY.

When summer was in its noon, what a life was on the lawn,—what a stir was in the trees! But already that stir is hushed,—that life is dead. Along with the bees and the butterflies, the leaves have been shaken from the boughs, and are entangled among the matted grass or trodden in the mire. And as soon as these withered waifs began to flutter through the darkening air, the birds of passage took their flight, and on the wings of the equinox joy sped away to balmier climes.

How wide the desolation! how like our human history! On the trunk of the last century there swarmed a life so fresh and verdant that it felt as if it could not fade; but the death-wind has blown and torn from their places the master-spirits of that time. And in the promenades, and ball-rooms, and public gardens of that day, what a blaze of beauty,—what a burst of full-blown fashion! Where is it now? Beneath the churchyard sod; like heaps of withered leaves, drifted into the family vault or obscurely mingled with promiscuous clay; and here and there a tattered survivor, like a funeral pennon, clinging to the desolated bough.

The hay-field, the flower-garden, the forest,—each is an emblem of our death-doomed generations. But more pensive still than this simultaneous decay is the fading of the individual flower. You cherished it in your chamber window. Perhaps an invalid yourself, you were glad at the first promise of a blossom. That bud expanded, and along with it your own heart seemed to open. Its exotic odour brought you hints of warmer, brighter regions, and its petals so soft and pure, sent up your thoughts to the home of the angels. But no morrow saw its loveliness repeated. Next day it already drooped, and in a few days more the glory was departed,—the withered shrub was carried out to the dead flowers' mausoleum.

The friend with whom you take sweet counsel,—the brightest and dearest presence in your home,—you yourself, are such a fading flower. And there are times when the thought comes over you quite agonizingly, "All flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof as the flower of the grass." This terrible mortality! They drop on every side. It seems as if almost every morning you woke up to a world which contains a friend or two the fewer; and every morning's post, every daily paper, is apt to tell some goodness that has passed away, some joy whose extinction has left the surrounding region dark and desolate. And the mourner is no less mortal. "We all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us away." Detached from the Tree of Life, behold our entire generation drifting to and fro. Ensconced behind the rock or lurking in the cranny, a few may escape a little while; and some may touch the verge and be snatched back

again by the returning eddy. But the besom of Destruction plies its sleepless vans, and soon or late the last reluctant flutterer is blown across the brink and disappears in the great eternity. It is appointed unto man to die; and the reprieve is very short. For with these mighty aspirations, and with all the possibilities of achievement and enjoyment, what are threescore years and ten? To such capacities as ours,—with a universe so vast and with our own adaptations so endless,—what a mere glimpse of existence is the best estate of man! As the Northumbrian noble said to King Edwin, "When the king and his guests are feasting round the fire on a stormy night, feeling nothing of the cold and forgetful of the wild winter weather, there darts through the hall a poor sparrow, in at one door and out at the other; the moment which the bird spends in warmth and shelter is as nothing to the long time of the tempest. And so is the brief moment of our present life to that long tract which has gone before, and which is still to come."[1] And were this the whole of it,—what a tantalizing taste of the banquet of being,—what a flash through the cheerful realms of existence, and then to be driven out into the blackness of darkness for ever!

Profiting by the season and its solemnizing influences, let us raise our thoughts from the decay and the dying which nature exhibits to the life and immortality which the Gospel reveals. Or, as we have both combined in that passage where St. Peter says, "Believers are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word

[1] Neander, vol. v. p. 24.

of God, who liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you,"—a passage in which the perpetuity of God's truth is contrasted with the transitory state of man on earth, and in which the believer of God's truth is represented as a partaker of God's immortality.

When God created man, he did as when He created angels; He formed a creature inspired with His own immortality, and designed to live for ever. But that creature sinned and died. God's beloved Son assumed into union with His Godhead the soul of man and man's body also. That soul kept sinless to the last, and that body spiritualized by its transit through the tomb, He has carried on high, and enthroned in His own heaven; and in Himself as the first fruits, He shows what a redeemed Humanity is capable of becoming and enjoying. In that incarnation of His, however,—in that work of life-earning obedience and death-averting expiation,—as well as in that glorious ascension,—the Saviour was not solitary. He was not acting on His own behoof. He was a Second Adam, representing a numerous family, and procuring for them afresh the gift of a forfeited immortality. Nor can words express how complete and copious is that life of which Immanuel is the great Recoverer, and which commences in the soul when quickened anew by the Holy Spirit the Comforter. But it is an abundant life:—a life in its amplitude of range and largeness of enjoyment, the

image of its Author's own :—a protected life,—a life really "insured,"—a life that can never more be forfeited,—a life identified with the Saviour's own, and hid with Himself in God :—an endless life ; a life which Gabriel himself will not outlive, and which, derived directly from the great "Fountain of Life," is lasting as God's eternity.

"All flesh is grass," but believers in Jesus are no longer mere "flesh." They are partakers of a Divine nature. They are the children of an immortal Father,—the children of that God who liveth and abideth for ever. "To as many as received the Saviour, even to those who believed on His name, He gave the power to become the sons of God." And as long as their Heavenly Father lives, they cannot die.

"The word of the Lord endureth for ever." Our words come and go. We ourselves are always changing, and what was a genuine effusion of our hearts at one period of our history, may be no true index of our feelings afterwards. And circumstances vary. We find that we have been deceived in our estimate of character, and people turn out so different from what we took them once to be. The consequence is, that many of our past sayings are now a dead letter ; and when reminded of an old promise, we are apt to feel that, were it to be repeated, we should not make that promise now. But the gifts and calling of God are without repentance ; and when He proclaimed the fullest and freest Gospel to our world, He did not feel more propitious towards sinners of our race than He is feeling now. To His all-seeing eye the end was known from the beginning ; and as no crime has evolved so tre-

mendous as to modify the saying, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin," so no transgressor has arisen so gigantic as to limit the Divine forgiveness, or to form an exception in the Divine and world-embracing "Whosoever." Among all the utterances of the Most High, and all the declarations of that Faithful Witness, His incarnate Son, there is not one which has faded into inanity or grown a dead letter; but, like the wise, holy, and unchanging Speaker, each is a faithful saying,—a lively oracle,—vital with Divine significance,—like God Himself, a word that liveth and endureth for ever.

Reader, admit into your mind that Gospel, and it will fill you with its own immortality. From the dark grave of ungodliness it will raise you into the sunshine of God's reconciled countenance, and breaking down the putrid vault of corruption and earthly-mindedness, it will usher you into the resurrection-life of the new creation,—the pure pleasures and holy joys of God's own children,—nay, into something of that beatific life with which God's beloved Son is made glad for evermore. And with the living God for your Father, and the living Saviour for your Friend, and with the land of the living for your adopted country and expected home, you will verify those words of Jesus, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

And just as the bleak weather sends us into our homes, and makes us thankful for the warmth and shelter we lately slighted, so separations, sorrow, felt infirmity, will send us back into these faithful sayings, and will make us gladly retreat into the truth of the Gospel;—a Gospel

which has brought life and immortality to light, and which, overagainst Nature's death and desolation, reveals an endless life, a deathless Saviour, an eternal God.

An endless life! In its ordinary on-going the hidden life may be too languid for the believer's consciousness, and it may sometimes seem ready to die. But where the faithful saying is believed a new life exists, and the more implicitly and joyfully that Gospel is embraced the more abundantly does that new life mount up in the assured and exulting spirit, and manifest itself in the holy and benignant deportment. And to not a few of God's people has it been granted so to realize the blessedness beyond, that it almost seemed as if excess of life shook down the tabernacle, and as if the fittest sequel of the history, and the truest epitaph were to record that from that day, "Mortalis esse desiit."[1]

A deathless Saviour! Jesus "once dead dieth no more;" and it is not only to make intercession for us that He ever liveth, but to manage and administer all those matters which might cause our hearts to be troubled. You are going a long journey, and you deposit with some trusty friend your most valued effects, and if only he lives, you know that on your return you shall get a good account of them. Or the night is pitchy dark, and you are stepping from the slippery bulwarks of the ship on to the steep acclivity of the unknown shore; and although between ship and shore there is an interval and a black abyss beneath, the extended hand which grasps your own is so powerful, and is accompanied by a voice so cordial and

[1] The inscription on Dr. Jortin's grave-stone at Kensington.

true, that without any tremor you spring forward and exchange your heaving barque for solid land. You are going the way of all the earth, and as there is no one else to whom you dare intrust it, in the words of the only Christian whose dying words Scripture has preserved, you cry, "Lord Jesus, into Thy hands I commend my spirit;" and as the anchor drops, and as from earthly life you step forth into the unknown Hereafter, you exclaim, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me," for you know whom you are believing; the everlasting arms are around you, and He who says, "Lo, I am with you," is able to keep you.

"'My friend, sincerely yours *till death*,'
The world no further goes;
Perhaps, while 'earth to earth' is laid,
A tear of pity flows.

Be thou, my Saviour, then my friend,
In thee my soul shall trust;
Who false wilt never prove in death,
Nor leave me in the dust.

Home while my other friends return,
All solemn, silent, sad;
With thee my flesh shall rest in hope,
And all my bones be glad."[1]

An eternal God! Yes; from the frailty and fugacity of the creature it is delightful to retreat into the permanence and constancy of the unchanging Jehovah; and how re-assuring and joyful to remember, that though the mountains depart, and the hills be removed, there is a kindness that will not depart, and a covenant that cannot

[1] Bishop Horne.

be broken. After all, mutation and decay are the exception, not the rule—an incident in the history of the universe, which shall come to an end when, with one foot on the earth and another on the sea, a mighty angel swears, "There shall be no more Time." It may be a mere moment in the howling winter night that the little bird spends in the blazing banquet-hall; but before that winter began to bluster there was a summer in the world, and there will be again a summer when winter storms have ceased to rave. In such a summer our earth commenced its course, and through the weary cycle,—though not long to Him with whom a thousand years are as one day,—it is revolving back into the sunshine of its Creator's blessing. Already the mid-winter of its grossest darkness, and its greatest crime, the murder of the Lord of glory,—that blackest, guiltiest hour is past; and streaks of dawn on the hills of darkness, and a few flowers appearing, promise daybreak and a spring; and before the cycle is complete and the mystery is finished, with fairer scenes than Eden and one spot at least dearer to God than Eden ever knew, the redeemed and regenerate earth will find itself once more in the sunshine of its Creator's countenance—a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

In that sleepless Wisdom and unchanging Goodness be it ours to acquiesce and rejoice; and if we quit this scene with any prayers unanswered, or any labours uncompleted, let it content us to know that the scene is still pervaded by a Presence which controls all events for the best, and which shall perfect all that ought to be permanent. If events are not moving to our mind,—if they

do not march to that short jingle which we call harmony, —let us remember that in God's great anthem there are breaks and pauses, notes high and low, and passages very mournful, as well as others full of terrible majesty before we come to the triumphant outburst of the conclusive chorus. Meanwhile, from all intermediate frailty or decay, be it ours to retreat into His society who has been "the dwelling-place of His people in all generations;" and appropriating the words of Moses, the man of God, let us pray in the spirit of his most ancient psalm—

"O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come;
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home,—

Under the shadow of thy wings,
Still may we dwell secure;
Sufficient is thine arm alone,
And our defence is sure."

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON.

THE FATHERLAND.

"A certain man had two sons."—LUKE xv. 2.

OUR cords are clumsy. Strand by strand, and rope by rope, we twist our cables; yet we dare not lengthen them too far, for fear their own weight break them, and in the strain of the tempest the strongest fly asunder like flax in flame. God spins His cords so fine that, except in diffracted light, you cannot see them; but these cords of His are seldom broken. You befriend a youth or relieve a stranger, and you think no more about it; till on a distant day, perhaps in a foreign land, in some hour of need, help is raised up, and in your deliverer you recognise the object of your former bounty. And just as in such an instance, held by a mystic clue, the little seed which you cast on the waters comes back into your bosom a loaf of bread; so the old saying also holds true, and "curses come home to roost." A crime is committed, and all trace is obliterated, every token buried; but now that the head which holds the fatal secret is laid on a dying pillow, the leash is pulled, and dark and croaking descends the bird of evil omen, or with fiery eye and crimson beak the vulture of despair, and with fear of coming judgment scares the guilty conscience.

Of all God's cords the finest, and perhaps the strongest, is the cord of love. Quitting his native chimney, among the canals and grassy fields of Holland, the stork pursues the retiring summer, and soon overtakes it in Nubia or Morocco. There, quite unconscious of the fetter beneath his wing, he revels on the snakes of Taurus or the frogs of Nile: till at last, on a brilliant May morning, there is a sharp tug, and then a long steady pull, and high overhead float the broad pinions, and presently in the streets of Haarlem the boys look up, and shout their welcome, as, with eager haste and noisy outcry, an old acquaintance drops down upon the gable, and, drawn back to the old anchorage by a hawser of a thousand miles, the feathery sails are once more furled. Like instinct over a generation's interval brings back the exile to his Highland glen. It matters not that in the soft Bermudas life is luxury; it is of no avail that in this Canadian clearing a rosy household has sprung up and in proud affection clings around him; towards the haunts of his childhood there is a strange deep-hidden yearning, which often sends absent looks towards northern stars, and ends at last in the actual pilgrimage. And although by the time of his return he finds that no money can buy back the ancestral abode; although, as he crosses the familiar hill and opens the sunny strath, strange solitude meets him; although when he comes up, the hamlet is roofless and silent, and the bonny beild, the nest of his boyhood, a ruin; although behind the cold hearth rank nettles wave, and from the cairn covering the spot where in the mornings of another world he waked up so cosily, young weasels

peep forth; although the plane is cut down, or the bour-tree, under whose sabbatic shadow his father used at even-tide to meditate; although where the vision dissolves a pang must remain, there is no need that he should go back, bleak and embittered, as to a disenchanted world. This glut of reality was wanted to quench a long fever: but even here, if his own heart is true, he will find that God's cord is not broken. Cottages dissolve and family circles scatter, but piety and love cannot perish. The cord is not broken; it is only the mooring-post which a friendly hand has moved further inland, and fixed sure and steadfast within the veil; and as the strain which used to pull along the level is now drawing upward, the home which memory used to picture in the Highlands, faith learns to seek in Heaven.

We too were once at home. As even pagan Cleanthes and Aratus sang—

"We too are God's offspring."[1]

The race opened its existence under the eye of God, made after His image; and whether he exercised his gentle dominion, or was occupied among the trees of the garden, or walked with his heavenly Father, listening to His voice in the cool of the day, nothing could be nobler or more blessed than that imperial infancy. Nor have we quite forgotten it. Betwixt what the Book has told us, and

[1] The well-known expression quoted and endorsed by St. Paul in his address to the Athenians, Acts xvii. 28, 29. Like Paul, Aratus, who flourished about 270 B.C., was a native of Cilicia. His poem, the *Phœnomena*, opens with an acknowledgment of Zeus, and our dependence upon him, and derivation from him:—

Πάντη δὲ Διὸς κεχρήμεθα πάντες·
Τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν.

what is recalled by a dim mysterious memory, we feel that times are changed with us. We once were better off. A love smiled over us, a glory shone around us, which never meets us now; and many of our dearest words—Love, Joy, Innocence—seem to be so much a reminiscence of a far-off, long-faded time, that we may be excused for standing still and asking in bewilderment—

> "Have we been all at fault? Are we the sons
> Of pilgrim sires who left their lovelier land?
> And do we call inhospitable climes
> By names they brought from home?"[1]

The true home of humanity is God,—God trusted, communed with, beloved, obeyed; and

> "Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,"

do we come "from God, who is our home," but "trailing clouds of glory with us."[2] Alloyed and interrupted by much that is base and wicked, there are in human nature still touches of tenderness, gleams of good feeling, noble impulses, momentary visitations of a natural piety, brought away from that better time and its blest abode, and which may be regarded as electric thrills along the line which connects with its Creator a fallen but redeemed humanity: as so many gentle checks of that golden chain which will one day bring back God's banished, and see the world "all righteous."

Far from home, humanity is still in the hand of God. Not only is it subject to His righteous and irresistible sovereignty, but it has a place in His deep and desirous

[1] *Balder*, p. 181. [2] Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality."

compassion. And for every one of us it is a solemn and affecting thought, that before he can be finally and for ever lost, he must "break the band and cast away the cord" by which forgiving mercy would draw him to itself. We know that it too often happens. Too often do we see men turn the back to God and not the face; and the last glance we get of them they are still departing. Still averse from God, and still departing, the cord of love and life's brittle thread snap together; and passing the bourne beyond which is "outer darkness," there is nothing which we are allowed to hope for them in that world where no gospel follows and no Holy Spirit strives. But, on the other hand, where there is any relenting towards the Ever-blessed, what can be more encouraging than the assurance that in the case of our fallen family, much as sin abounds, grace much more abounds? and that, notwithstanding all we have done to forfeit the filial position, there is on God's side so much of fatherly affection as not only to desire our return, but to devise methods unprecedented and costly for bringing us back?

The head of the great household is God, and the earthly home He has constituted so as to be an image of His own paternity. That home is founded in love, and in administering it love is called forth every day,—often a pitying, forbearing, forgiving love,—a love sometimes severe and frowning, often self-denying, it may chance self-sacrificing. As the world now is—a ruin, with a remedial scheme in the midst of it—that home is the nearest image of the church, and should be the most efficient fellow-worker with it. "In the family the first man

himself would receive lessons on self-government such as even the garden of Eden did not supply, and perpetual occasion for its exercise. In what a variety of ways would he learn to repeat to his children the substance of the Divine prohibition to himself—'Thou shalt not eat of it.' How soon would he who had had Paradise for a home discover that if he would convert home into a paradise he must guard his offspring at this point, subordinating their lower propensities to their superior powers."[1] If presided over by those who themselves fear God—and otherwise no house is a home—there will be something sacred in its atmosphere, and alike enforced by affection and authority the lessons of heavenly wisdom will sink deep; and with a sufficient probation superadded to a careful protection, it is to be hoped that, before transplantation into the world's rough weather, good dispositions may have been so far confirmed as only to strengthen by further trial.

We must not be too confident. It would be rash to say that where the home is right the inmates never can go wrong. There was once a great heart-break in heaven: angels grieved, for so many of their brethren had gone away to return no more. Since then, another great prodigal has left the Father's house—for of all prodigals our race is the greatest. And when the Great Father has Himself had to mourn over wayward runaway children, let us fence our habitations as we please, it would be too much to hope that evil shall never enter, or that headstrong folly shall never gather all together and go away.

[1] Harris's *Patriarchy*, p. 113.

Still, the promise to believers includes their children, and the instances are anomalous and few where a hopeful outset ends in a worthless old age. In seeking for your offspring the kingdom of heaven and the righteousness thereof, you who are parents may confidently claim the sympathy of the Father of spirits, and the succour of that great Teacher who has all hearts in His hand, and turns them as the rivers of water are turned. And the records of religious biography nearly all confirm the promise. The favoured Samuel is the son of the praying Hannah. The young evangelist is the child of the believing Eunice, and Eunice, again, is the daughter of the like-minded Lois. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the God of Joseph also. The first martyr in the days of the bloody Mary was John Rogers. He is still represented by honourable and Christian descendants in this country; and in the United States, where his children's children have reached the eleventh generation, it has been remarked that few families contain so many pious members, and singularly enough, with one intermission, the eldest son has always been a minister. Having frequently heard the remark that the sons of ministers and deacons turn out badly, the secretary of the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society instituted an inquiry in a district where he could insure correct returns. It contained 268 families of the class in question, and in these there were 1290 young persons above fifteen years of age. Out of these 1290 young people 884 were hopefully pious, and the great majority (794) were united to the church of Christ. Amongst these households there were 56 highly-

favoured families, with an aggregate grown-up membership of 249 individuals, where all were hopefully pious. On the other hand, out of the 1290 only 17 had become dissipated and most of these had broken down whilst away from home.[1]

In order to make your home the preparation for heaven, the first thing is to strengthen that cord of love by which you ought to hold your child, even as our heavenly Father holds His children. That love is yours already—an upleaping, uplooking affection, if you do not destroy its tenderness by perpetual rebuffs, if you do not forfeit reverence by being yourself unworthy of it. "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath;" be not always scolding, reproving, punishing; "but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Take advantage of their affection for yourself, and use it as the appointed medium for drawing them into the love of God. When the soft iron is in the electric circuit it grows magnetic, and not only clings itself, but keeps lesser and kindred masses clinging: so when the soul is in the right relation to the living God, it acquires a strong induction—a mighty power of attracting others in the same direction. If your conduct is consistent—if your life goes by God's rules—power from on high will attend the occasional word or the special effort. Long lectures and formal advices are of small avail; but should there occur some solemnizing season—a time of deepened spiritual earnestness—a time when your own soul is melted by the love of Christ—a time when your boy himself is brought to unwonted tenderness, by sickness or sorrow, or a departure from home; —if at such a season you should speak to him fully, affec-

[1] Barnes on Isaiah lix. 21.

tionately, seriously, like the last charge of David to Solomon, like Israel's farewell to his sons, a peculiar power and pathos will attend the words, and will secure the preservation of a father's legacy.

Meanwhile, the precept is plain, the duty clear. Train up the child in the way he should go. If he is not to go in the way of low pastime and coarse indulgence, point him to higher joys; open to him the well-spring of knowledge; try to ascertain and develop a turn for some ennobling pursuit, or create a taste for the treasures bequeathed by genius. If he is not to go in the way of sinners—if you would preserve him from the temptations of idleness and the vacuity of an aimless existence—train him up in some craft or calling; let him go forth into society fit to do, and to do well, some portion or other of that work of which the world has need, and which makes so sweet the bread and so pleasant the rest of the labourer. If he is not to go in the way that leadeth to destruction, make it plain that you would rather see him good than great; and, yourself in the fear of God all the day, train him up in the way of simplicity and godly sincerity. Train him up in frugal tastes and self-denying habits—if possible with a Roman hardihood of frame, and as much as may be with a Spartan disdain of luxury. Train him up in energy and self-reliance, grappling with difficulties, and learning independence by doing things for himself. Train him up in manly frankness, that with open face he may meet each friendly overture,—in modesty withal, lest a precocious arrogance repel the wise, lest his own mental growth be stunted by a supercilious

priggishness. Train him up in the way of universal good-will and general helpfulness, so that wherever there is a burden to be borne he may lend a hand; so that wherever there is a friendly service to be done he may have an errand; so that gratitude, affection, and the blessing of them that were ready to perish, may surround his goings, and then embalm his memory.

After all, however, there is another influence which goes further in creating the home. It is mother-love which endears the fatherland, and it is to the cradle that the fairy-line is fastened which even in the far country holds so mysteriously the heart of the wanderer.

When Napoleon, with his army of invasion, lay at Boulogne, an English sailor who had been captured tried to escape in a little raft or skiff which he had patched together with bits of wood and the bark of trees. Hearing of his attempt, the First Consul ordered him to be brought into his presence, and asked if he really meant to cross the Channel in such a crazy contrivance. "Yes, and if you will let me, I am still willing to try." "You must have a sweetheart whom you are so anxious to revisit." "No," said the young man, "I only wish to see my mother, who is old and infirm." "And you shall see her," was the reply, "and take to her this money from me; for she must be a good mother who has such an affectionate son." And orders were given to send the sailor with a flag of truce on board the first British cruiser which came near enough.[1]

[1] The story is told by Alison (*French Revolution*, ch. lxxxi.), who quotes Las Casas. It has been turned into verse by T. Campbell.

Napoleon was always eager to declare his own obligations to his high-spirited and courageous mother, the beautiful Letizia Ramolini; but the difficulty would be to find any man of mark who has not made the same avowal.[1] Of a few biographical works lying near at this moment, five out of six begin to the same tenor. Take an instance or two. The first is Kirby, long the patriarch of English entomology. "To his mother, and to her alone, he did not hesitate to affirm that he was indebted for his taste for natural history." While still a little child she gave him, as his most precious playthings, shells from an old family cabinet. He was exceedingly attracted by their different shapes and colours, and soon learned to know them every one, and ask for them by their right names; and when a veteran of eighty-four he still showed his friends a little herbarium which, with the help of his dear mother, he had compiled at nine years of age.[2] Next comes Goethe. His mother "is one of the pleasantest figures in German literature. Her simple, hearty, joyous, and affectionate nature endeared her to all. . . . She had read most of the best German and Italian authors, had picked up considerable desultory information, and had that 'mother-wit' which so often in women and poets seems to render culture superfluous. . . . To Wolfgang she transmitted her love of story-telling, her animal spirits, her love of everything which bore the stamp of distinctive individuality, and her love

[1] Perhaps we should except Napoleon's great rival; see the article on Wellington in the *Quarterly Review* for July 1866.

[2] Freeman's *Life of the Rev. W. Kirby*, pp. 17, 18.

of seeing happy faces round her."[1] The last is the great critic and grammarian, Thiersch. His mother did not teach him Greek, but out of her Lutheran hymn-book she taught him songs about the Saviour and His dying love. She also taught him kindness to the poor,—a lesson which all through life he practised liberally. On one occasion, whilst a small boy, his mother left him at home with the door locked and the window open. A beggar woman came. There was a French crown on the table, which little Fritz at once handed out to her, bidding her tenderly "Come soon back again." She was so honest as not to go away till the lady returned, and for restoring the crown was rewarded with cakes and eight good groschen.[2]

Yes, if you choose, let the foundation be granite, let heart of oak be the roof-tree. Let masculine energy, stern rectitude, unflinching endurance build up the paternal abode; and assign to the head of the house such intelligence, elevation, dignity, as beseem "the father and the priest." But for the cheerful plenishing, for that warm inner atmosphere in which childhood nestles, and in which good feelings are fostered into life, for those first and most influential lessons which precede all teachers and tutors, you must look to a kindlier and more pervasive presence; you must think of one who is more than either housewife or learned lady. With calm, clear eyes, deep insight, ready sympathy; active, without bustle; alert, without over-anxious vigilance;

[1] G. H. Lewes's *Life of Goethe*, pp. 7, 8.
[2] Fr. Thiersch's *Leben* (1866), vol. i. p. 3.

ignorant perchance of æsthetic rules, yet with subtile touches transforming into a fine picture the home-spun canvas, and with a soft fairy music blending into harmony the noises of the day; apathetic about stocks and shares and far-off millions, but with a keen appreciation of new sovereigns and no disdain for sixpences; a mere formalist, if professing interest in city improvements or parochial reforms, but as touching torn curtains and threadbare carpets much exercised in spirit; sure that the commotions of Europe will all come right, but shedding bitter tears at any outbreak of juvenile waywardness, and praying earnestly, "Oh that Ishmael may live before thee!" with small belief in the transcendental philosophy, and allowing that much may be said on both sides, but in the interpretation of the Ten Commandments positive, unreasoning, absolute; in theology hopelessly confounding the distinctions of the schools, and in an innocent way adopting half the heresies, but drinking direct from the fountain that living water which others prefer chalybeate through the iron pipe or aerated from the filtering-pond, and in a style which Calvin and Grotius might equally envy teaching the little ones the love of the Saviour;—the angel in the house moulds a family for heaven, and by dint of holy example and gentle control her early and most efficacious ministry goes further than any other to lay the foundations of future excellence, and train up sons and daughters for the Lord Almighty.

LEAVING HOME.

"The younger son gathered all together, and took his journey."
LUKE XV. 13.

SELDOM, it may be hoped, does a youth leave home simply because he has tired of it; still more rarely, we trust, because he wishes to lead a life of mere self-indulgence. One instance, however, of this kind we do remember, with its unlooked-for ending. In the town of Huntly there was living, a hundred years ago, a lad lately returned from college, whose only quarrel with a rough and regardless neighbourhood was the insufficient scope it gave to his love of fun and frolic. Having heard a great deal about London, and believing that it was the place where every man might do that which is good in his own eyes, he gathered all together, and took his journey towards the southern capital. On the road, however, he turned aside to visit a kinsman who had himself led a life of notorious wickedness, but whose friendship he wished to retain. This relative he found on a bed of sickness; but although his bodily sufferings were great, they were almost swallowed up in the anguish of his spirit. In a fearful tide of remorse, his sinful life came surging back upon his memory, and as God's waves and billows went over him loud were the cries for mercy and

vehement the promises of amendment, which he offered in every gasping interval. God spared him. Eventually he recovered; and recovering, he returned to the old excess of riot. But though he forgot his own vows and prayers, his visitor could not forget them—the outcries of a guilty conscience shaken over the mouth of hell. Not only did they drive all thoughts of folly from his mind, but they sent him back to his own abode a crushed and frightened penitent. At last, having obtained mercy, he startled his fellow-townsmen by standing up in the market-place and urging them to flee from the wrath to come; and although at first scoffs and derision—yes, and angry missiles—were his recompense, through a long life he persisted snatching brands from the burning, and giving numbers in Banff and Moray reason to bless his solemn and rousing ministrations.[1]

More frequently it is on an honourable errand that the youthful pilgrim sets forth. A subsistence must be earned, an education must be obtained, a profession has been chosen, a Divine call is obeyed; and so the student goes to college, the recruit seeks his regiment, the sailor joins his ship, the aspirant after an honourable independence starts for the city or the distant colony; and there

[1] The above particulars were related to us in 1840 by an "old disciple" in Huntly, James Maitland, who well remembered George Cowie, and who, we believe, was one of the fruits of his ministry. Describing the rough treatment given to the young evangelist, our informant said—"They flung *custocks* at him;" and many of our readers will remember the old song which associates "custocks" (cabbage-stems) with Strathbogie. In a brief memoir it is mentioned that Mr. Cowie's "first alarm about his soul was occasioned by witnessing the death of an uncle in the year 1765" (Kinniburgh's *Fathers of Independency in Scotland*, p. 13). Our impression is, that the uncle temporarily recovered.

is on both sides true tenderness—on the one side the best intention, on the other many an earnest prayer. "Happy, thrice happy, as an after-remembrance, be the final parting between hopeful son and fearful parent, at the foot of that mystic bridge which starts from the threshold of home—lost in the dimness of the far-opposing shore—bridge over which goes the boy who shall never return but as the man."[1]

Blessed be God, the tearful hopes of that anxious moment are often fulfilled; and happy are the parents who, in the frank and affectionate communications of their absent child, see plainly that the heart is still at home; and still happier they who, after whatsoever interval, receive him back with new excellence developed or with character confirmed. To John Angell James's mother it was a delightful discovery when the careless apprentice returned to Blandford and she found a Bible in his great-coat pocket. A bundle of bank-notes would not have made her nearly so happy. How the eyes of Henry Kirke White's mother must have filled over these lines from her gifted son near the close of his Cambridge career:—"Never do I lay myself on my bed before you have all passed before me in my prayers; and one of my first earthly wishes is to make you comfortable, and provide that rest and quiet for your mind which you so much need. I shall have some quiet parsonage, where you may come and spend the summer months. Maria and Kate will then be older, and you will be less missed." And when the bitterness of death was over—for even though a

[1] Lord Lytton's *What will he do with it?* vol. ii. p. 84.

sword should pierce through the soul, blessed among women is the martyr's mother[1]—still more blessed may we deem in after-years that devout lady in Manchester, who, in the June of 1555, received this letter from her son in London, looking forward to his fiery chariot at Smithfield:—"I die as a witness of Christ, his gospel and truth, which hitherto I have confessed as well by preaching as by imprisonment; and now, even presently, I shall confirm the same by fire. I send all my writings to you by my brother Roger: do with them as you will, because I cannot as I would. I pray God to bless you and keep you from evil. May He give you patience, may He make you thankful for me and for yourself, that He will take your child to witness His verity. . . . Thus, my dear mother, I take my last farewell of you in this life; beseeching the almighty and eternal Father, by Christ, to grant us to meet in the life to come, where we shall give Him continual thanks and praise Him for ever and ever. Out of prison, your son in the Lord, JOHN BRADFORD."

For character there is a twofold security—the first commandment and the fifth—love to God and hallowed domestic affections: nor is that character likely to drift where both anchors are out, and where the heart is well moored both to the home on earth and the home on high. Reader, have you both? Young men, scattered about in little companies or dwelling alone in your solitary lodging, have you both? Like a good ship off a dangerous coast, are you keeping your heart with all diligence, and are

[1] Luke ii. 35; i. 28, 42.

both bower and sheet-anchor out? the bower of memory binding you to the fireside far away where loved ones linger? the sheet-anchor of hope entering within the veil, and attaching to the Father's house and the goodly fellowship assembled there? Inasmuch as both homes are lost to sight, they are in your case things of faith; but in the storm of temptation, when the importunities of sense and the enticements of Satan are equally vehement, the only preservative from shipwreck is faith in the unseen—faithful memory or faithful hope; and when the poor little kedge of carnal policy comes home—when like a leaden fluke good-humour bends, like a rotten cable worldly wisdom snaps in sunder—they are only God's anchors which continue sure and steadfast.

To those who are still in the outset of their active life we offer a few further hints. They will be received in good part, for they are given by one who still remembers some of his own youthful feelings, and who has often had reason to rejoice in the good and gallant fight of young men who were "strong and overcame the wicked one."

If you wish to have a happy and honourable career, you must choose the best companions. Your fellow-clerks, your neighbours in the shop or factory, you cannot choose: they are chosen for you: but it is left in your own option to select your friends; and you may find it a great difficulty. If you were a dry, disagreeable fellow, people would let you alone; but if you are worth cultivating; if instead of being a proser or a pedant, you have pleasant dispositions and a frank, popular way; instead of being a

silent solemn automaton, or the next thing to it, a man of one idea—a wooden centaur who has grown into the same substance with his hobby; if you have a rich and varied nature; if you have humour; if you are musical; if you are fond of athletic sports; if you read; if you row:—every separate liking is just a several hook, a distinct affinity to which a kindred spirit will be apt to attach itself, and ere ever you are aware you may find yourself complicated with an acquaintanceship which, although at some point or other agreeable, is on the whole cumbrous or uncongenial. It is pleasant to feel that you are liked, and it is painful to keep at arm's length those who take to you and would evidently value your society. Nor would it be fair to call them by hard names. They are not seducers or systematic assassins, lying in wait for the precious soul; and the harm they do is not so much from having any evil purpose as from their having no right principle. Nevertheless, if a man carrying contagion proposes a visit or offers you his arm, although he intends no injury, you stand aloof, and you are not to be denounced as a churl for declining a danger which he does not realize. And in the philharmonic class or in the rifle corps, you are alongside of a splendid shot or an excellent singer, and you are not a little drawn to one another; but if on nearer intercourse it turns out that he drinks too freely, or keeps no Sabbath, or has loose notions on morality—"can a man take coals into his bosom and not be burned?" "the companion of fools shall be destroyed"—it would not be complaisance but cowardice—it would be a sinful softness, which allowed affinity in taste to imperil your faith

or your virtue. It would be the same sort of courtesy which in the equatorial forest, for the sake of its beautiful leaf, lets the liana with its strangling arms run up the plantain or orange, and pays the forfeit in blasted boughs and total ruin. It would be the same sort of courtesy which, for fear of appearing rude or inhospitable, took into dock the infected vessel, or welcomed, not as a patient but a guest, the plague-stricken stranger.

A great help is a good companion. Robert Story and Thomas Pringle were lads of seventeen, who, from the same pleasant Roxburghshire, went up to Edinburgh College sixty years ago. They "lodged in the same rooms, where amidst the novelties of the capital they continued to 'remember their Creator in the days of their youth.' They performed religious service regularly, as they had been accustomed to see it done at home, taking the duty alternately. The Sabbath they kept holy, as they had been taught to do; avoiding so much as opening a book on that day which was not of a directly religious character."[1] To the nobler attributes nothing is so fatal as fast living, and with the pure innocent lives which these young friends led it was wonderful how rich in romance was the rest of existence, how rich withal in religious feeling. That fine idealism which, added to faith, gives the soul two pinions and makes the sublimest spirits, was never broken in the case of either, and they could not only soar at will, but—as long as you continue a little child you keep the sceptre, you retain the kingdom of heaven—in virtue of their very unworldliness, they had

[1] Leitch Ritchie's *Memoirs of T. Pringle*, p. xvii.

strange ascendency over men. The one, a cripple and a man of letters, inspired his own family with enthusiasm such as clansmen used to feel for stalwart chieftain, and in the make-believe of his genius the South-African glen to which he carried them off wanted no Tweed in order to resemble the Border, whilst from his gentle goodness there fell on Bushman and Caffre a reverence and a respect for his little settlement not to be gained by the musket and cannon. The other we still remember with lustrous eyes wide open to the beauties of the landscape, but in his inner daily walk expatiating through scenes far fairer: weak in that logic in which Scotchmen are strong, but strong in that love and devotion without which school logic is weak: the pastor of Roseneath, a brightly-cloudy pillar, transcendental and indefinite, but irradiated at top by a sun which to his spirit all these forty years had never set; with a creed not the clearest, but with a Christ-loving heart, moving on before his people in a way which made them feel that if they could only follow the same shining track, they too would reach the better land.[1]

Two are better than one, and you will find it both protection and incentive if you can secure a faithful friend; and in some respects better than two are the many: therefore you cannot do more wisely than seek out in the

[1] Some one called Pringle "a Scot without guile." See Beattie's *Life of Thomas Campbell*, vol. ii. p. 56. His effort to secure "homes abroad" for his kinsfolk by carrying them out to South Africa, is an interesting chapter in the history of emigration; and from his venerable widow, long an attached member of Regent Square congregation, the author has heard many anecdotes of lion-hunts and other incidents of life at Glen Lynden.

Young Men's Society a wider companionship; and whilst instructed by the information of some, and strengthened by the firmer faith or larger experience of others, there are important themes on which you will learn to think with precision, and in the exercise of public speaking you will either acquire a useful talent or will turn it to good account.

You are a young man away from home. We have said. Choose good companions; we must add, Beware of bad habits.

It was the third hour of the day, and Abdallah still lingered over the morning repast, when there came a little fly and alighted on the rim of his goblet. It sipped a particle of syrup and was gone. It came next morning. and the next, and the next again, till it caught the eye of the scholar. As he considered it, and as it gave forth its many colours and moved itself aright, it seemed beautiful exceedingly, and in his heart he could not find to drive it away. Wherefore it came day by day continually, and waxing bolder and bolder it withal became greater and greater, till in the size as of a locust could be perceived as the likeness of a man; and the greater that it grew the more winning were its ways, frisking like a sunbeam, singing like a peri, so that the eyes of the simple one were blinded, and in all this he did not perceive the subtlety of an evil jinn. Wherefore, waxing bolder and yet bolder, whatsoever of dainty meats its soul desired the lying spirit freely took, and when, waxing wroth, the son of the prophet said, "This is my daily portion from the table of the mufti; there is not enough for thee and

me ;" playing one of its pleasant tricks, the brazen-faced deceiver caused the simple one to smile ; until in process of time the scholar perceived that as his guest waxed stronger and stronger, he himself waxed weaker and weaker.

Now also there arose frequent contention between the demon and his dupe, and the youth smote the demon so sore that it departed for a season. Thereupon Abdallah rejoiced exceedingly, and said, "I have triumphed over mine enemy, and when it seemeth good in my sight I shall smite him that he die." But after not many days, lo and behold! the jinn came again, arrayed in goodly garments, and bringing a present in its hand, and with its fair speech, saying, "Is it not a little one?" it enticed this silly dove so that he again received it into his chamber.

On the morrow, when Abdallah came not into the assembly of studious youth, the mufti said, "Wherefore tarrieth the son of the faithful? perchance he sleepeth." Therefore they resorted even to his chamber, and knocked, and lifted up their voice ; but as he made no answer the mufti opened the door, and behold! on the divan lay the dead body of his disciple. His visage was black and swollen, and on his throat was the pressure of a finger broader than the palm of a mighty man. All the stuff belonging to the hapless one was gone, the gold and the jewels, and the parchment-rolls, and the changes of raiment ; and in the soft earth of the garden were discerned the footsteps of a giant. The mufti measured one of the prints, and lo! it was six cubits long.

What means the apologue? who can expound the riddle? Is it the bottle or the betting-book? is it the billiard-table? is it the theatre, or the tea-garden, or the music-saloon? is it laziness? is it debt? is it the wasted Sunday? But know that an evil habit is an elf constantly expanding. It may come in at the key-hole, but it will soon grow too big for the house. At first it may seem too trivial for serious attack, but it will presently prove the death of the owner. We know not that we can give a better commentary than the experience of a citizen of Boston, whose kindly memory is still honoured in New England. Writing to a young friend, says Amos Lawrence: "At the commencement of your journey take this for your motto, that the difference of going *just right* or *a little wrong* will be the difference of finding yourself in good quarters or in a miserable bog or slough at the end of it. Of the whole number educated in the Groton stores for some years before and after myself, no one else, to my knowledge, escaped the bog or slough; and my escape I trace to the simple fact of my having put a restraint upon my appetite. We five boys were in the habit, every forenoon, of making a drink compounded of rum, raisins, etc., with biscuit—all palatable to eat and drink. After being in the store four weeks I found myself admonished by my appetite of the approach of the hour for indulgence. Thinking the habit might make trouble if allowed to grow stronger, without further apology to my seniors I declined partaking with them. My first resolution was to abstain for a week, and, when the week was out, for a month, and then for a year.

Finally, I resolved to abstain for the rest of my apprenticeship, which was for five years longer. During that whole period I never drank a spoonful, though I mixed gallons daily for my old master and his customers. I decided not to be a slave to tobacco in any form, though I loved the odour of it then, and even now have in my drawer a superior Havannah cigar, given me not long since by a friend, but only to smell at. I have never in my life smoked a cigar; never chewed but one quid, and that was before I was fifteen; and never took an ounce of snuff, though the scented rappee of forty years ago had great charms for me. Now, I say to this simple fact of starting *just right*, am I indebted, with God's blessing on my labours, for my present position, as well as that of the numerous connexions sprung up around me."[1]

It is of vast moment to be "just right" when starting. At Preston, at Malines, at many such places, the lines go gently asunder; so fine is the angle that at first the paths are almost parallel, and it seems of small moment which you select. But a little further on one of them turns a corner or dives into a tunnel, and now that the speed is full the angle opens up, and at the rate of a mile a minute the divided convoy flies asunder: one passenger is on the way to Italy, another to the swamps of Holland; one will step out in London, the other in the Irish Channel. It is not enough that you book for the better country: you must keep the way, and a small deviation may send you entirely wrong. A slight deflection from honesty, a slight divergence from perfect truthfulness, from perfect

[1] *Diary and Correspondence of Amos Lawrence*, Boston, p. 10.

sobriety, may throw you on a wrong track altogether, and make a failure of that life which should have proved a comfort to your family, a credit to your country, a blessing to mankind.

Beware of the bad habit. It makes its first appearance as a tiny fay, and is so innocent, so playful, so minute, that none save a precisian would denounce it, and it seems hardly worth while to whisk it away. The trick is a good joke, the lie is white, the glass is harmless, the theft is only a few apples from a farmer's orchard, the bet is only sixpence, the debt is only half-a-crown. But the tiny fay is capable of becoming a tremendous giant; and if you connive and harbour him, he will nourish himself at your expense, and then, springing on you as an armed man, will drag you down to destruction.

THE FAR COUNTRY.

"A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living."—LUKE xv. 11-13.

As it rises up to our imagination, there was once a pleasant home presided over by a kind and wealthy householder. Two sons grew up in it. The oldest was sedate and prudent; so correct and proper that he seldom got into any trouble, and was always well pleased with himself. But we should not wonder though the younger was more popular. Not nearly so diligent, he had a fine flow of spirit, and with his sallies of fancy and his frank hearty ways, we can believe that he was his mother's favourite, and that when he turned up among the labourers in the harvest-field, his coming would be the signal for shouts and merriment.

Fancy is a famous inmate, but singing out of doors she becomes a dangerous decoy. Precious beyond rubies is the idealism which can invest with celestial dignity the earthly avocation, and which, even when the hands are engaged in downright drudgery, can fill the mind with noble thoughts, and carry you through the daily task as

a son or daughter of the king; but very perilous is this same power when, instead of dignifying duty and bringing heaven into the home, she becomes the siren, and, flying out at the window, sings on the distant hills or far off at sea, luring you away from the solid land or the sober threshold.

So was it with the younger son. The father's house grew tame. To be doing the same things over and over again, day after day, was very tiresome. He would like more liberty; he would like to see the world. Tush! why talk of danger? That is the way old people always do; but he is out of leading-strings. He is no longer a baby. He is come of age, and can take care of himself: and what is more, he is his own master, and entitled to do as he pleases. And so, with the song of the charmer hardening his heart against every delicate or duteous consideration, practically avowing that home has lost its attractions, and that he does not mean to waste any more years "serving his father," he goes up and demands his inheritance. "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." Nor does it appear that the father refused. Man is a free agent. If Gabriel will not continue in heaven as a son, he shall not be detained as a slave; and when Gabriel's younger brother, Adam, wearied of obedience, wished to set up for himself, "the portion of goods which fell to him" he was allowed to take with him—those bodily organs, those senses, those intellectual and moral endowments, which in Eden were an inexhaustible fortune, but which in the "far country" go but a little way.

A few days intervened. For converting into gold and gems his goods and chattels, so as to make them portable, some little delay was needful; nor does the bird always take wing the instant the cage is opened. As he was getting his own way, he would take his own time; and as he was free to set off when he pleased, he did not need to be anxious or hurried.

At last it arrived, the much-wished-for morning. No mention is made of any tender leave-taking; for when a man becomes a lover of pleasure his affections get utterly blunted. The tears of a mother are troublesome. He would rather that people would not make so much ado, but show a little more sense. And so, without a word of thanks to his father, without any keepsake to his old companions, he hied away on the eventful journey.

Do you not see him? Healthy and handsome, and flushed with hope, he trips along gaily. With pearls and rubies in his purse, and such a load of coin in his girdle, who could be richer? And as up its south-eastern portal he presses into the sunland, life swims before him a vision of glory, a romance of ever-varying ecstasy. Tasks are over; care is left behind; the swallow in its lofty sweep is not more free; the butterfly, tipsy with nectar and dozing on the acacia blooms, is not more happy. O life, life! What a sensation is the fresh feeling of existence! It is dull work to walk. He must jump for joy. He must run up the steep places. He must shout to the jerboas and the conies, and send them helter-skelter to their holes. In merry mischief he must chase the wild hog and her squealing litter till they reach their refuge in the reeds

or the jungle; and in mad freaks and frolicsome escapades he flings away

> "The prodigal excess
> Of too familiar happiness."

Till now, he is in a new land. It seems all garden. Palms are plentiful, and orange-trees, with rich exotic scent and golden apples. And the houses are so handsome! For vastitude and for amazing antiquity, even the holy and beautiful house at Jerusalem yields to those temples. And then, this glorious river! With balm above, and reflecting the spotless blue, it seems to carry in solution all the ages which have wandered by its brink, and all the shadows which have dropped into its tide—sphinxes, pyramids, palaces. And as the lotus lifts its chalice to the light, whilst the crocodile lurks below; as from its far-off source it suddenly arrives, with bounty in its bosom and sunshine on its face, but with a dark secret in its heart, and then holds on its way, most ancient of rivers and most mysterious,—at once an emblem of human life, an epitome of human history,—we know the fascination it exerts on many a pilgrim of our modern time. Like a liquid spell, a floating poem—as you surrender to its sorcery, your inch of duration expands into epochs, and into your own life you take up the thousands of years preserved in these changeless monuments. Aching nerves soothed, chafed lungs comforted, it feels as if every furlong that you float bore you farther and farther from all that is dangerous in disease and from all that is painful in the past. And with sensations so novel,—with existence made so easy,—you not only forget your father's

house and your own people, but you forget the frailty of your frame. In self-complacent catholicity you become tolerant of strange customs and strange creeds; and it is well if, amid the pleasant witchery, you remember the deceitfulness of sin, and retain in sharp demarcation the rules and restrictions of the Decalogue.

Even had the wanderer been a man of faith and fixed principle, there are temptations in travel; and away from wonted influences and restraints, it needs special watchfulness and prayer,—it needs the special grace of God,—to keep the way of holiness. In his Egyptian journey even the faith of Abraham faltered; and although his pious errand may protect the evangelist, and his grave pursuit may be some help to the explorer or the trader, novel scenes and foreign ways are a great trial to the tourist. His errand is relaxation, amusement, unbending; and in order to bring back a clear conscience and a purer piety, as well as health and spirits, he would need to remember everywhere, "Thou, God, seest me." And after all, of the traveller's reminiscences the most delightful are Bethel and the sea-side at Troas, spots consecrated by the communion of saints and fellowship in prayer—made memorable by the nearness of Heaven and glimpses of the glory of God; or places like the road from Jerusalem to Gaza, or the river-side at Philippi, where strangers were drifted together, and a passage of Scripture was read, or a conversation ensued, which made it on either side an interview much to be remembered.

Our traveller, unfortunately, had no good errand. He merely wanted to enjoy life and see the world, and be

sufficiently far from home. And we have fancied him come down into Egypt. Notwithstanding its cruel treatment of his ancestors, this country was still attractive to the Jew, and it sufficiently meets the requirements of the parable. Beautified by the Greek and enriched by the Roman, the old colossal Egypt of the Pharaohs had ceased to be formidable, and many a Hebrew found his way to such a city as Alexandria,—the merchant to make his fortune, the scholar to study in its matchless library, the spendthrift to command its luxuries and enjoy its pleasures.

In the mood of our adventurer, a city of this description was sure to be fatal. In the countryside where he grew up, if there was wickedness, it carried its own warning. The sot was notorious and was shunned; there was no field for sharpers and swindlers; if there had been detected any open sepulchre, with his evil communication corrupting the atmosphere, the nuisance would have been quickly ejected from the neighbourhood,—the scurrilous foul-mouthed scoundrel would have been cast forth from all decent company; and by stamping vice with the brand of villany, society not only vindicated God's law. but preserved itself from many snares and sorrows.

Here, however, it is all so different. Everything is elegant, and at first it is enjoyment sufficient to view the mighty piles of masonry,—the obelisks and colonnades, the public walks and fountains; and as he visits the bazaars, brilliant with the manufactures of three continents, or goes down to the wharf where bee-laden barges and floating granaries are coming in, the bustle and the

Babel noises are a stirring contrast to the stupid life at home. Presently, however, the eye is satisfied with seeing, and in quest of refreshment he steps in where food and wine are sold. Prepossessed by the size of his girdle, a stranger enters into conversation with him. The stranger is very gentlemanly, and he must be wonderfully accomplished; for he can speak Hebrew as well as Greek and the native *patois*. Nothing can be more affable; and although his entire air is distinguished—so distinguished that his fine clothes, contrasting with a country suit, bring the blush into our young friend's face, and make him feel like a bumpkin and a boor—he condescends, when asked, to share the flask of wine, and enters with kindest interest into the affairs of the new-comer. The result is an agreeable acquaintance, who undertakes to show him something of the town, and who introduces him to a nice set of friends. They welcome to their society the simpleton with his store of silver pieces. They see that he is, according to our vulgar vocabulary, very "fast" and very "green." Fond of display, they flatter him, and feast at his expense right royally; and not disinclined to dissipation, they lead him on to all evil, even as he is able to bear it; till taverns and theatres, music-halls and midnight orgies, are his familiar resort, and in the excess of riot he outruns his tamer or more cautious companions.

We said when principle is weak the "far country" is fatal. It was the loss of this young runaway that he had now arrived where there were few restraints on evil, fewer helps to religion: no Sabbath, no public worship, no stated reading of the Word of God. Even though there

might be many of his compatriots in the place, he did not seek them out. He had no wish to fall in with them; he rather studied to keep out of their way; and so, as long as money lasted and comrades cheered, with equanimity unruffled and conscience unaroused, he kept up the revel, waxing wilder and wilder, worse and worse.

If any one is obliged to leave home—not from love of idleness, not from love of liberty, not from love of pleasure—but on such business as to our large towns brings young men every day—on virtuous errands and with honourable aspirations—willing to work their own way and lighten the load of others—do not forget that God is here. It would be true if you were the only occupant of earth; it is no less true of you as a unit in the million-peopled city: "O Lord, thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thought afar off; thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways." But in order that you may be in the fear of God all the day long, you must avoid those whose frivolity dissipates thought, as well as those whose evil courses make it their interest to forget God's presence or deny His power. Seek out for your companions the high-toned, the pure-minded, the Christian; and if occasionally sighing for "the calm retreat, the silent shade," remember what a holy life was lived by Daniel in Babylon; remember that at Rome, in Rome's worst days, there were found friends of Jesus, and in the palace of the worst of emperors—"saints in Cæsar's household." Remember, too, that a thing does not become right when it ceases to be repulsive. No doubt that

was a snare to the prodigal. In the far country vice was disguised as much as possible, and looked quite another thing in the garb of fashion. So if over their greasy cards you chanced to see a set of low ruffians quarrelling—the fiend on every face and blasphemy on every tongue—you might recall what your grandmother used to say about the devil's books, and almost vow that you would never touch them. But go into the Kur-Saal at Homburg or Baden—a palace in the midst of a garden—and in glittering saloons with magnificent music, for which you pay nothing, see Satan enthroned as an angel of light. They are ladies and gentlemen all: every movement soft and silken, and nothing to interrupt the well-bred silence, except the ivory ball revolving, and the chink of gold and silver, as happy winners garner their harvest of napoleons or florins. Surely amidst these mountains of money there is enough for all, and if it was very wrong the people could not look so respectable. Yet, after all, it is only the tuneful Lorelei seeking to draw down into her gloomy gulf the simple voyager. These tranquil countenances and soft movements are but a masque, a veil, a curtain; and behind—within—as any one can tell who has been there, are bankruptcy and suicide, fraud, peculation, forgery—deserted wives and children cast upon the world—magnificent domains brought to the hammer—and ever and anon a murder. So in our large cities there is a sort of gambling which does not look particularly repulsive; for it is not carried on in "hells," and it pleads the sanction of some titled names; and yet its results are hanging like a millstone round the neck of many a once promising young

man, and, to say nothing of those whom it has reduced to beggary or blackguardism, numbers of its victims must be sought in the Portland hulks or Dartmoor prison. They went to the race-course, or, without going there, they laid wagers on horses, and sooner or later they lost more than they could pay, and in dread of dishonour they took means to get the money at the very suggestion of which, once upon a time, they would indignantly have exclaimed, "Is thy servant a dog?" and after a few miserable make-shifts, only adding sin to sin, there came detection, and ruin, and disgrace. Reader, you will be a wise and happy man if you resolve in the strength of God never to lay a wager, and never to play for money. If you would keep the devil at arm's length you will never enter a billiard-room, and the betting-book is a record in which your name will never appear.

The time of a young man's arrival in London is a time of trial; but those who have the prudence or the principle to resist the temptations of the outset are usually preserved to the end.

On a wintry day in 1803 a lad left his native Kelso so sad at heart that, as he stood that night on the bridge at Berwick, the tear had almost frozen on his cheek. It was his eighteenth birthday when he found himself for the first time in our great labyrinth, and on one of the first evenings after his arrival, a youth, who from the same vicinity had gone up to town the previous year, took him out to see the sights. The stroll ended in a sort of blind alley, and as his companion knocked at a door it was opened by some light-looking girls evidently well ac-

quainted with their visitor. With instant revulsion the new-comer started back, for instinctively he felt that it was "the house which inclineth unto death." In much agitation he exclaimed, "O ——, where are you going?" and he entreated his companion to come away. That companion only laughed and went in, and as our friend sought his way back to his lodging he felt very desolate. It was a cold and dreary night, and in his disheartened mood he thought that London must be a devouring monster which swallowed up whatever came into it, and changed it into the likeness of its own deformity. Here in a few months it had made a virtuous youth a profligate, and as if walking amidst snares and pitfalls and strange mysteries of iniquity, he trembled for himself. The whole thing was too painful for him, till he went into the sanctuary. But next Sabbath he inquired his way to Swallow Street. There he found the worship which he had learned to love beyond the Border, and as he listened to the earnest sermon he began to feel, "God is in this place." The little church brightened into a Bethel, and helped to cheer the following week; and then came an introduction to the minister, and a class in the Sunday-school, and the acquisition of one good friend after another; till at last the streets which at his first arrival were haunted by gloomy phantoms and cruel ghosts, grew populous with brethren in the Lord; till he who had himself been so graciously preserved became distinguished for his efforts in preserving and strengthening younger brethren.

It was on the fiftieth anniversary of that eventful day that our venerable friend, his heart overflowing with gra-

titude to God, told us this incident. By that time he was an honoured citizen, and his name well known throughout the churches. Numbers of ministers and missionaries knew him. Many widows and orphans knew him. Nearly all our religious societies and benevolent institutions knew James Nisbet.

Under God, that trying evening was the pivot on which turned the whole of his following history. If he had for a moment yielded—if through curiosity or weakness he had accompanied his guide across the sinful threshold, he might have shared the same fate, and in a few months, with ruined health and morals, been, like him, sent back to his native place a shattered, dying invalid. And unfeignedly do we congratulate all to whom God and a careful up-bringing have given the same blessed and self-protecting purity. It is a pearl of great price; may it never be flawed or sullied! And you to whom life in the city is new, pray to God to "turn away your eyes from beholding vanity," and may He enable you to follow their shining track who through the same scenes passed undefiled, and who now walk with Christ in white among the worthy!

You too, kind friends, to whom God has given a pleasant habitation, extend its shelter to the young and inexperienced. There are some who make a system of this, and many who in various professions are now treading the paths of righteousness look back with gratitude to those whose timely thoughtfulness invited them to the family pew, or on the Lord's-day evening offered them the hospitalities of a Christian home. It is a labour of

love which almost any head of a household can render. It were a fitting acknowledgment to Him who, when the path was slippery, upheld yourself; and few efforts are more like the Saviour Himself than the endeavour to strengthen weak principle and protect endangered virtue. It is by fostering the smoking flax that Christ has created all the lights of the world.

Returning to the prodigal: the portion of goods which fell to him must have been a handsome patrimony, and it would have been his wisdom to wait for it till the proper time. In that case, before entering on the actual possession, he would have known how to guide it. He would have learned how to make it more by trading, and he would have learned some temperance and self-control. But with indecent haste he forestalled his reversion, and what he obtained so easily he quickly fooled away. No trinket or toy could he see but his fingers itched till he owned it, and though it had only been in costly jewels and fashionable attire, a short period would have disposed of it all. But then there was the riotous living. The daily bread costs little; but dainties are dear, and are never so costly as when they are gifts from the devil. His comrades treated him, and in return he must needs treat them; and if over exquisite viands and the vintages of distant lands the time flew fast, the money flew faster: till all of a sudden the horse-leeches dropped off, the parasites disappeared; the victim was exhausted, his "substance" was gone.

RIOTOUS LIVING.

"The younger son . . . took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living."—LUKE XV. 13.

NOTHING can be nobler than a true and thorough manhood, where, amid the seductions of sense, the soul still retains the mastery of itself by retaining its loyalty to God. Such men are always impressive; men like Blake, content with the softest plank for a pillow; men like Havelock, who, never thinking of comfort, never lost sight of duty; men like Grimshaw, who, with meat to eat that others knew not, would dine on a crust of bread, then preaching the love of Jesus till the tears ploughed white channels in the grimy faces of the Yorkshire colliers, would turn into his hay-loft and find it Eden in his dreams; men like Milton, of maidenly purity of heart and heroic grandeur of purpose, "himself a true poem, that is, a composition of the best and honourablest things," and flowing forth accordingly in the stately song which still ennobles English literature; men like Paul, who, "keeping the body under, and bringing it into subjection," was enabled to bring myriads in subjection to the Saviour, and perform those prodigies of daring and devotion at which the world will wonder evermore.

Such men command our homage. For the moment, we forget that they are of like passions with ourselves, and they give us a new and exalted conception of what human nature can perform when sustained by high motive and animated by the Spirit of God.

On the other hand, it is deeply distressing to find the higher nature dethroned or in thraldom. Wild stories circulate in many lands. In Northern Europe they tell how a child has been carried off by wolves, and brought up amongst them—taught to live in wolfish fashion, sleeping in the forest, joining in the hunt of the reindeer or aurochs, and drinking with savage delight the blood of the palpitating prey. And in Africa the like story is told—how the man has been kidnapped by the baboon, and, hurried up the mountain, has spent amidst these hideous monsters a horrible captivity.

The risk is real. The climate may be good, the settlement may promise all that heart can wish, and the vicinity may be so far cleared as to make the immediate homestead tolerably secure; but it is folly to deny all danger. A wise man will be cautious; and if cautious he need not be nervous. It is only right and kind to give warning; and pleasant as is the lot of your inheritance, it is well to remember that the thickets and steep places are haunted. Frightful ogres frequent them, and they are sure to sally forth on the heedless wanderer. There are even instances on record where they have vaulted over the enclosure and carried off from the threshold some hapless victim. The names of three of the best known and most mischievous are—the Lust of the Eye, the Lust

of the Flesh, and the Pride of Life; or, as they are sometimes called, Vanity, or the Love of Display; Sensuality, or the Love of Low Pleasure; and the Affectation of Fashion, or the Keeping-up of Appearances.

As long as the younger son remained at home he was comparatively safe; but the far country was the native land of these monsters. There was no patrol to keep them down, no reward was offered for their destruction, and being thoroughly bold and fearless, they came down into the streets and gardens; and this poor senseless youth was soon seized hold of and carried captive at their will.

A hateful sight it is to see the man the slave, the brute the master. At first there may be some disgust, some effort to escape, some feeble, impotent resistance; but too often it ends in the utter degradation of the higher nature and the brutalizing of the man. The old fables come true. The voluptuary becomes a satyr; the sybarite, the toper, and the glutton are transmuted into swine.

For a hundred years England has yielded no scholar comparable to Richard Porson. With a memory in which words and things were alike imperishable, and with that marvellous intuition which enabled him to personate any author, Greek or Roman, and in the broken parchment or faded manuscript at once perceive what Æschylus or Tacitus had meant to say, he had withal a wit which made him welcome at the board of rich and clever men; and to feed the wit he plied the wine, till in floods of liquor wit and wisdom both were drowned, and, the remains of the scholar buried in mere beastliness, the sot disappeared from society. For a hundred years Ireland

has yielded no dramatist, no orator, equal to Richard Brinsley Sheridan; but even for that brilliant genius, whose versatile talents brought London to his feet and carried captive the senate, strong drink was too powerful, and, in place of bouquets and ribbons, with writs and executions showering around him, he lay on his desolate couch bankrupt in character as well as in fortune, and would have been carried off in his blankets to the debtors' jail had not the apparitor of a mightier tribunal stepped in before the sheriff's officer and claimed the prisoner. For a hundred years—nay, through all the years—Scotland has yielded no poet who could seize the heart of the nation as it was seized by Robert Burns—master alike of its pathos, humour, chivalry. Alas! that pinions capable of such a flight as "Bruce at Bannockburn" and "Mary in Heaven," should have come down to get smeared and bird-limed on the tapster's bough; alas! that from the Cottar's Saturday Evening he should have passed away to the companionship of drunken ploughboys and coarse bullies in their night-long carousals in low taverns. But so it was; and, standing by the untimely grave of the Scottish minstrel, truth and tenderness can only say—

"What bird in beauty, flight, or song,
Can with the bard compare,
Who sang as sweet and soar'd as strong
As ever child of air?

Oh! had he never stoop'd to shame,
Nor lent a charm to vice,
How had Devotion loved to name
That Bird of Paradise!"[1]

[1] James Montgomery.

Wine is a mocker; strong drink is raging. Like the skulls which a savage carries at his girdle or sets up on poles in his palace-yard, and tells the traveller what a mighty warrior this or the other was till his axe or arrow laid him low; so, of all the sins, Intemperance is the one which, reaped from the ranks of British genius, boasts the most crowded row of ghastly trophies. To say nothing of the many sorely wounded, amongst the actually slain it numbers the musician and the artist, the philosopher and the poet, the physician and the lawyer, the statesman, the preacher, the judge. As we hinted already, for the greater part it gains its advantage by beginning so early and in a guise so little formidable. In elfin minuteness it enters the student's parlour, or even the schoolroom dormitory, and the champagne breakfast or the furtive wine-party lays the foundation of a life-long sorrow. Like the spear some ten or twelve fathoms long with which the Vancouver Indian ploughs the river-bed, and the barbed point comes off in the first great sturgeon which it pierces, the tenacious fibre uncoiling as he flies: so, paddling over the surface of society, it is with a long shaft that the demon of Drunkenness explores for his victims; but when one of his barbs gets fairly through the mail it usually fixes and is fast. The line is a long one, and will hold for years. It marks the victim; and the first time he rises another dart strikes through his liver, and then another, and at last a great many:—the social glass leading on to the glass suggestive or the glass inspiring, and the glass restorative leading on to the glass strength-giving, and that again to glasses fast and frequent,—glasses care-

drowning, conscience-coaxing, grief-dispelling,—till, gasping and dying, the hulk is towed ashore, and pierced through with many sins, weak, wasted, worthless, the victim gives up the ghost, leaving in the tainted air a disastrous memory.

Whether coarse or refined, riot speedily wastes the reveller's "substance." Not only does it sap the constitution, and soften the brain, and shatter the nerves, and enfeeble the mind, but it exhausts the estate, and soon brings the spendthrift to poverty. And if the passion still urge and the fear of God has departed, wild methods will be tried to meet the demand and assuage the frantic craving. Keepsakes will be sold or pledged, to part with which would once on a time have looked like sacrilege. Money will be borrowed as long as any one will lend it, and then it will be taken from the till, or intercepted on the way from a customer or correspondent; and thus—it is a tale a thousand times told—dissipation leads on to dishonesty; and in keeping up the jovial life, nay, in merely keeping up appearances, character will be vilely cast away.

On a Saturday morning in July 1850 two inquests were held in Newgate. One suicide was a pugilist, who, on the previous day, had been sentenced to die as a murderer; the other was an insurance clerk, who had, on the same day, been adjudged to ten years' penal servitude. His name we need not recall; but it is well to know his story. As a clerk, he had a salary of £200 a year, but he had tastes for the gratification of which two hundred a year was a trifle. Fond of the theatre, it became the height of his ambition to be personally acquainted with

those glorious creatures who on the stage personate kings and queens, and he was greatly flattered when some of them accepted his invitation, and partook at his expense of a costly supper. The experiment was so successful that it was soon repeated; but in entertaining actors and actresses no actor of them all was sustaining a part so arduous as his own. He was too illiterate to be a judge of plays, but in such cases the want of scholarship is readily forgiven to a wealthy man. And it was for a wealthy man that this patron of the drama needs must pass, and with infinite effort—effort compared with which the tight-rope is pastime,—for six years he kept up the illusion. His equipage in Hyde Park so elegant, his suburban villa so splendidly furnished, giving by turns a quiet *déjeuner* or a sumptuous banquet, he was applauded as a fine open-handed fellow, and was envied, as a man is apt to be envied who is made up of money. But when the truth came out and he was proclaimed a swindler and a thief, his poor dastard spirit could not survive the degradation; and after such a taste of luxury, what a prospect ten years of prison fare and servile drudgery! The profligate was caught, but the prodigal did not come to himself; and so from within those gloomy walls, in the same short summer night fled by the same guilty exit spirits twain—the blood-stained murderer, and the man who, by false appearances, and for the praise of fools, had doubly destroyed himself.[1]

On a winter morning in 1856—a Sunday morning—a friend of ours, a physician, was sent for to the Hampstead

[1] *Facts, Failures, and Frauds*, by D. Morier Evans, pp. 74-105.

workhouse. It was to view a lifeless body which had been just picked up in the neighbourhood of a pond, and which there was no difficulty in identifying. A member of Parliament, once a junior Lord of the Treasury, a chairman of banks; able, influential, successful, what could be wanting? what could go wrong? The great wants were integrity, openness, truth: and the thing which put him all wrong was the pride of life, and the consequent need to keep up a hollow appearance. For this he forged documents and issued false shares, and embezzled funds to the extent of hundreds of thousands of pounds; and when opium could no longer dull the corrodings of conscience, and the evil day was imminent, he wrote to a friend: "Dear Robert,—To what infamy have I come, step by step, heaping crime upon crime; and now I find myself the author of numberless crimes of a diabolical character, and the cause of ruin and misery to thousands. O how I feel for those on whom this ruin must fall! I could bear all punishments, but I could never bear to witness the sufferings of those on whom I have brought such ruin. It must be better that I should not live. O that I had never quitted Ireland! O that I had resisted the first attempts to launch into speculations! If I had had less talents of a worthless kind and more firmness, I might have remained as I once was, honest and truthful, and I would have lived to see my dear father and mother in their old age. I weep and weep now, but what can that avail?" Then putting a bottle of poison into one pocket and the silver cream-jug into the other, as soon as the streets were quiet he rose from his lonely tea-table.

and from the warm well-carpeted room in Gloucester Terrace walked forth into the cold February midnight. Carrying his load of guilty memories he climbed the hill to Hampstead Heath, and passing the darkened houses where, their week's work done, the honest trader and the day-labourer slept securely, he sought the spot where the largest and most successful of swindlers was to lay down the burden of a life no longer bearable, and add another commentary to the ancient texts, "The way of transgressors is hard. Happy is the man that feareth alway."

Our hearts are weak, and we have continual need to pray, "Deliver us from evil;" for temptations are sometimes terrible. When in front of his own cathedral Bishop Hooper was fastened to the stake and the fire was slowly burning, they held up a pardon, and told him that he had only to say the word and walk at liberty. "If you love my soul, away with it!" was the exclamation of the martyr as every tortured fibre called for pity, but the loyal spirit revolted from the wickedness. So there may come a fiery trial where the adversary has got in pledge your income, your earthly prospects, your parents or your children, and asks if you will be so infatuated as to cast them away when the stroke of a pen, the pronouncing of a word, a nod or sign would suffice and save the whole. When the furnace is thus seven times heated it will need much grace in view of the proffered bribe to cry, "Away with it!" and yet, through His timely succour, who, in the days of His flesh and in view of an awful alternative, poured forth strong crying and tears, such ordeals have been encoun-

tered by men of like passions with ourselves, and from this lesser Gethsemane they have emerged with spirit softened and character confirmed, enriched by the loss, perfected by the suffering.

However, it was not by a roaring lion, but by a plausible tempter that man was first led into evil; and our greatest danger arises from the subtlety of Satan and the pleasures of sin.

> "I've heard that poison-sprinkled flowers
> Are sweeter in perfume
> Than when, untouched by deadly dew,
> They opened in their bloom.
> I've heard that with the witches' song,
> Though harsh and rude it be,
> There blends a wild mysterious strain
> Of weirdest harmony;
> So that the list'ner far away
> Must needs approach the ring,
> Where, on the savage Lapland moors,
> The demon chorus sing.
> And I believe the devil's voice
> Sinks deeper in the ear
> Than any whispers sent from Heaven,
> However soft and clear."[1]

Gratuitous wickedness is rare; nor is it by a single bound or stride that eminence in evil is attained. In doing wrong the transgressor usually fancies that there is an absolute necessity: he cannot help himself: the end justifies the means: and when once the poisoned perfume is inhaled, when once the "weird harmony" has beguiled the sense—that is, after the first false step has been taken—the devil suggests, "In for a penny, in for a

[1] Aytoun's *Bothwell.*

pound. The money will never be missed. Nothing venture, nothing win." Or in conjunctures more horrible still, and when there seems only one way to cancel the debt or conceal the delinquency, he whispers, "Dead men tell no tales;" and now that the last of fifty steps, all wrong, but all seemingly inevitable, has proved a plunge into the abyss, the evil-doer wakes up with blood on his hands, with a ghastly crime on his conscience, with the sting of the never-dying worm in his bosom.

If you would pass innocently through a difficult world, keep within the rules. Let your life be open, your eye single, your walk in the broad light of day. If a mistake is committed, lose no time in acknowledging it; and beware of getting complicated with unprincipled or low-minded companions. They will be sure to use you as the cloak or the catspaw of their own designs, and then, when their purpose is served, or when the day of disclosure arrives, they will sacrifice you and save themselves.

Keep within the homestead. If compelled to quit the parental roof, cast yourself all the rather on your Heavenly Father's grace and guidance. And do not forsake the sanctuary. Many years ago we remember a fine youth who from the far north came up to be a clerk in the Post Office. For a long time he was constant in his attendance on the means of grace, and retained his amiable hopeful dispositions. But by and by his visits to the house of God became desultory; and not only did he disappear from the church, but he became shy of our own society. Years passed without seeing him, and then we were asked to visit him at the Old Bailey. It turned out that he had

fallen in with careless acquaintances, who had drawn him away from his earlier friends, and led him to misspend the Sabbath. Eventually he had married a worldly-minded woman, with stylish notions, and in order to supply her expensive tastes he had ended by taking money out of letters. We asked when he had been last in his old place of worship. He said that it was on the Sunday after his first offence had been committed, and when the sermon referred to an agitation then in progress for a Sunday delivery of letters in London. Bearing as it did on the circumstances of his own downfall, he still remembered an expression to the effect :—" The fear of detectives is a poor substitute for the fear of God ; nor will the authorities find it easy to obtain as servants men willing to break the Fourth Commandment, but warranted to keep the other nine." In his case, however, the broken Sabbath was no fault of the authorities. The day of rest was at his own disposal. The departure from God was his own evil heart, and so were the consequent dishonesty and ruin and disgrace.

Keep within your income. As we hinted at the outset, the great temptations to expense are the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life ; and to these the great antidote is, not a limited income so much as a large self-denial. It is the lust of the flesh when the little boy spends all his halfpence on sugar-plums. It is the lust of the eye when the peer cannot resist the porcelain of Sevres or the mosaic of Rome, but exhausts his estate in adorning his palace. It is the pride of life when the servant flaunts in finery and lets her parents starve ;

when the merchant spends on his mansion or his equipage all by which his neighbour or the world might be profited. But just as people can be profuse who are not earning a penny, so there are rich men who do not riot, and who in the generous use of their income enjoy a continual feast. If self-denying, you too will be rich. From personal expenditure saving all that you can, you will find it available for the most blessed of all bestowments; and in paying the school-fees of a younger brother, in a thoughtful gift to a sister, in lightening the burden of a toil-worn father, in promoting the comfort of a faithful old servant who can work no longer, in a subscription to the missionary society or the Sunday-school excursion, in contributing to the happiness or welfare of others, you will reap the divine reward of self-denial.

A MIGHTY FAMINE.

"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want."—LUKE XV. 14.

GOD has given us rules, and guarantees that if we keep them all will go well. These rules are very plain, and it is no small recommendation that they can be understood and carried out by ordinary commonplace people.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. In all thy ways acknowledge God, and He will direct thy steps. Your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. Keep thy heart with all diligence. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth. Let your yea be yea, and your nay be nay. Owe no man anything. Be pitiful, be courteous. To do good and to communicate forget not. Bear one another's burdens. Be thou in the fear of God all the day long. Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus."

There are great differences. There are small natures,

and small gospels. There are men whose mind has not much more than one faculty, and whose creed is contained in a single saying; and there are others to whom the whole manifestation of God comes welcome, and who in the sixty-six books of the Bible, and in the long annals of our human history, as well as in the large panorama of creation, recognising the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the light of God's countenance pursue their daily task, and fill up with numberless pursuits and experiences an existence all the more comprehensive because it is all redeemed, and all the more susceptible because none of it is remote from God.

However, spring's homely harbinger, with its two notes, sings as sincerely as the nightingale revelling through the diapason; and cheered by that love which is too abundant for the soul of an angel, the most limited nature will be made loyal, obedient, and filial. Such a nature will go by God's rules, and keeping these it cannot miss the way to welfare in either world.

Nay, so good are God's rules, that provided none of the others are transgressed, a single rule faithfully followed will conduct to some delightful or desirable landing-place. "Gather up the fragments that nothing be lost" made the fortune of Laffitte the banker. "Well, old fellow, how did you get together all this tin?" said the brusque youth to the wealthy Quaker. "By one article alone, in which thou also mayest deal if thou pleasest—civility," was the reply. And just as, by adhering to God's rules of frugality and courtesy, these men made their fortune, so it was, by his possessing a monopoly of another virtue that

Schwartz the missionary saved the garrison of Tanjore. The soldiers were dying of starvation, but the peasantry would not bring supplies, for they did not know the Europeans, and could not trust the rajah; but when the promises to pay were signed by Schwartz, the rice came pouring in, followed by nearly a thousand bullocks. In such a case the one pound gains many pounds, and the single excellence elevates all the character.

On the other hand, all may be lost by one transgression. The heart of this young man died away from his home. That home ceased to be sacred; his Father was no longer paramount. He felt as if he could do without either: nay, with his new notions and purposes, he would rather forget them; so he "took a journey," and did not stop till he reached "a far country," and found everything around him strange and novel. The branch had not only ceased to abide in the vine, but, "cast forth"—fairly over the wall and out of sight,—it speedily withered. Grace was gone. Prayer was given up. Good feelings faded, and now that temptation and combustible corruption came together, he was soon set on fire of hell. Lust and passion flamed forth, and he and his substance were quickly consumed with riotous living.

The home of the branch is the vine: the home of the heart is God. That, dear reader, is the place for you. Honour thy Father in heaven. Love the Lord with all thy soul. Morning by morning go forth in His blessing: and evening by evening, as you return with your finished task, your tribute of love and obedience, in child-like tenderness tell over the faults of the day, its sins and its

errors, and for the sake of that dear Son who pleaseth the Father alway, ask and obtain forgiveness.

But if from the tree of redeemed humanity you have cut yourself off—if from that Saviour into whom your "engrafting was signified and sealed" when parental piety placed the lamb in the arms of the Good Shepherd, and prayed that you might be more vitally and more entirely His than theirs—if from that "gentle Jesus, meek and mild," whose hands upheld your first feeble goings, and towards whom you once felt such simple and pure affection, you have now gone away, it is not for us to predict what shall be the first spark to fall into your withered heart; but, dissevered from the Tree of Life, we know too well that you are a brand prepared for the burning. Perchance the fire is already kindled. Lasciviousness, excess of wine, the slow fire of covetousness or the frenzy of gambling, worthless companionships and hollow ostentation, may already have possession of that mind from which ingenuousness, and faith, and loving-kindness, have fled away; but unless God in His mercy snatch the brand from the burning, the soul and its substance are sure to be wasted by this sinful propensity.

In the figurative language of the parable, there arose in the far country "a mighty famine." Extravagance soon brings the noble to ninepence,[1] and in the far

[1] Describing the separation of Mr. Badman and his bad wife, Bunyan says, "They had sinned all away, and parted as poor as howlets. And, in reason, how could it be otherwise? He would have his way, and she would have hers; he among his companions, and she among hers: and so they brought their noble to ninepence."—*Life of Mr. Badman*, chap. xviii. The noble was six shillings and eightpence.

country it is not far that ninepence will go. But there may be so mighty a famine and so great, that even the noble will not buy the loaf of bread.

One of the most pitiful incidents in the history of British genius is the death of Chatterton. We by no means quote it as a case of riotous living; but it will illustrate the "want" which comes over the spirit when other resources fail, and the Father's house is far away.—When a mere boy of seventeen he had passed off, in the name of an ancient English monk, poems of his own, with the archaic style so admirably simulated, and the historical allusions so adroitly managed, that for a time many clever men were taken in, and surmised no forgery. Elated by the success of this imposture, and conscious of no common powers, from Bristol he came up to London. There he promised himself a career of fame and fortune; and as he visited the theatres, and watched the grand equipages floating past, he saw in no distant vision the day when his verses should be in the mouths of men, and when the doors of the lordliest saloons would open to the poet. But the fame was slow in coming, and meanwhile the money failed. Hampered by no restraints of conscience, he made up his mind to pass himself off for a surgeon, and get appointed to a ship; but before he could carry his unprincipled scheme into execution, he found himself quite penniless. "Heaven send you the comforts of Christianity," he wrote to a correspondent; "I request them not, for I am no Christian." Bitterly boasting his disdain of Christianity, and his independence of it, he fell back on his own resources, and a fortnight after, a

jury brought in a verdict of *felo de se* on a strange self-willed youth found dead in his little room in Brook Street, Holborn.

He cared not for "the comforts of Christianity," and so when the mighty famine arose—when editors no longer cared for his effusions, and when the frauds and figments of years began to collapse—with hunger in the cupboard, and with heartless Muses staring at him so hard and stony—the trials which in a Christian bring out the mettle and make the man, in the case of poor Chatterton left no resource save arsenic and impotent anathemas on human kind.[1]

Reverting to the riotous living: not only does it exhaust the worldly substance, but by exhausting health and spirits, it destroys the power of enjoyment. Poor as are the joys of sense, it is a stupid policy which would distil into a single cup every pleasure, and in one frantic moment drain it dry. Where life and reason have survived the wild experiment, the zest of existence is gone, and waking up to a flat and colourless world, fastidious and fretful, blasted and *blasé*, in a frequent loathing of life and a general contempt of mankind, the voluptuary carries to the grave the sins of his youth.

1 "Quiet, plain scholars have lived, before now, in German or Scotch university towns, on boiled peascods for months, or a single guinea a quarter, earned by teaching, without saying much about it. Had youths of this type been in Chatterton's place in London, in August 1770, they would most probably have survived the crisis. They would have availed themselves gratefully, and yet honestly, of such small immediate aid as those aunts and others that we hear of so slightly in Chatterton's letters might perhaps, though poor, have willingly offered at the sharpest moment of the emergency; and, even failing that, they would have conquered by sheer patience."—Masson's *Essays, Biographical and Critical*, p. 316.

There is an instructive parable, not so much dwelt on as it ought to be. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, it[1] walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then it saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when it is come it findeth the house empty, swept, and garnished. Then it goeth and taketh with itself seven other spirits more wicked than itself; and they enter in, and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first."[2] And although primarily pointed against that Jewish "generation," the parable is deep in meaning and is widely applicable.

As has been remarked, "There are the fiend-like and the brute-like sins. The one leads frequently to the other; and the most hideous of all conceivable horrors is that combination of the two in mingled cruelty and lust, of whose possibility many a page of history bears witness. But in their origin, and most commonly in their development, the two are widely apart. There are the sins which men commit under the influence of the animal passions—sins of unchastity, drunkenness, gluttony—and these rob them of their manhood's crown, of moral self-control, and sink them for a time to the level of the brutes; and there are the sins which men commit under the influence of self-interest, hatred, and all the anti-social passions—sins of cruelty, perfidy, envy—and these do more than sink men to the level of the unmoral brutes; they degrade them to the likeness of devils. As

[1] The authorized version has "he," making it appear as if it were the man who walked. The original is neuter (ζητοῦν, ἐλθὸν), referring throughout to the unclean spirit.

[2] Matt. xii. 43-5. Luke xi. 24-26.

God is love, so is His antithesis hatred; and as man rises to the God-like through love, so he falls to the fiend-like by hatred."[1]

Now it will happen that at some period of life—perhaps quite early—a man is possessed by coarse passion. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;" and he flourishes the wine-cup, and gives himself over to the wildest jollity. But somehow or other he is led to reform. His health gives way, or he gets a great fright, and there is a marked change in his habits. It is not that the Spirit of God has come in, but for the present at least the unclean spirit is gone out, and without becoming a Christian, it is so far well that he seems effectually cured of his revelry.

Wearied, however, of wandering in dry places, the old demon returns, and the house is empty. There is no strong principle pre-occupying the heart, no good angel to guard the gate, and, familiar with all the avenues, the foul spirit enters the vacant domain. But this time he is not alone. He has brought with him seven spirits worse than himself. Is it possible? Is he not an "unclean spirit," and can anything be worse than lewdness, debauchery, drunkenness? Yes, indeed. Bad as is the beastly, it can be exceeded by the devilish; and in order to fathom the lowest depths of abasement, to drunkenness, revelling, and such like, must be added hatred, variance, revenge, misanthropy, murder, and the nature already embruted shall be dragged downward and yet downward by the fiend.

[1] "Christian Ethics," extracted from *Theological Review*, Sept. 1864.

Of this transmutation of the coarse into the cruel—of this eventual merging of the beastly in the diabolical—we have countless examples, and on every scale, from the Herods and Neros of other days down to the Rushes and Palmers of our modern time. Nor is it only the individual who blunts his sensibilities by vice who is likely to end in blood and violence, but the sottish nation soon grows sanguinary. Rome became voluptuous, then shouted for gladiatorial games; and by the unspeakable orgies of the Parc-aux-Cerfs France was prepared for the stream of slaughter which poured for months along the Place Louis Quinze.

Of the two things—the impossibility of appeasing heart-hunger without going home to God, and the danger that the unclean spirit, if not effectually expelled, will introduce others worse than himself—we know not that we can adduce an example more conclusive than Lord Byron.

It was the curse of this gifted man to inherit wealth without the grace to guide it, and so he obeyed the impulse of a strong and wayward nature, and wasted it on wassail. But in the land of Revelry there arose a mighty famine. It was not merely that funds ran short and farms were coming into the market, but there was something in his nature too lofty to be long content with pleasures so poor and low. Like generous wine, we might have hoped that it would rectify itself, and, having thrown down its feculence, would come out mellow, rich, and clear as the purple amethyst; when, alas! the thunder got into it, and turned it all to vinegar.

The sensual was transformed into the malignant. "I

have been looking into a dreadful book," says Dr. James Alexander, "Moore's *Life of Byron*—the life of one debauchee written by another. It is the most instructive comment I ever read on the divine word—'The way of transgressors is hard.' Voluptuary as he was, ever sighing after some new pleasure, and drinking to its depth the cup of worldly and sensual enjoyment, Byron seems to have experienced little less than a hell upon earth. Here I read in awful colours the tormenting power of uncontrolled selfishness. Remorse without repentance, and self-contempt without amendment, are dreadful scourges. From country to country he fled, but he carried the scorpions with him. His later works are only a disgorging of tumultuous thoughts and cruel passions—lust, mortified pride, and malignity—as if he would outrage the world even at the expense of every pang in his own bosom. Happy the poorest, weakest sufferer that believes in Christ."[1]

There is a frightful fiendishness in scattering firebrands, in sowing thistle-down, in systematically spreading contagion and death. But such were the last literary toils of Lord Byron. Before he took leave of society and song, he launched his final venture, and freighted it with blasphemy, impurity, and all sorts of devilry, and then sent it drifting towards his native shore. A poor apology for the wickedness is the poetry. The contagion may be carried about in a goodly garment—the tares, the thistle-down, may be dealt forth from an embroidered bag—the incendiary coals may be scattered from a golden censer:

[1] *Thoughts*, by Dr. J. Alexander, p. 420.

but the propagandist is none the less a miscreant—the crime is none the less a treason against humanity.

Was he happy? Take the last lines he wrote—the lines on his last birthday:—

> "My days are in the yellow leaf;
> The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
> The worm, the canker, and the grief,
> Are mine alone.
>
> The fire that on my bosom preys
> Is lone as some volcanic isle;
> No torch is kindled at its blaze,
> A funeral pile!"

Was he happy? On the night before Bellingham was hanged, he went to see the sight. "Seeing an unfortunate woman lying on the steps of a door, with some expression of compassion he offered her a few shillings; but, instead of accepting them, she violently pushed away his hand, and starting up with a yell of laughter, began to mimic the lameness of his gait. He did not utter a word; but," says Mr. Bailey, who tells the story, "I could feel his arm trembling within mine as he left her."[1] Can any man be happy, who, himself the victim of vile passions, has strewn his path through life with the wrecks of virtue? who not only carries live coals in his bosom, but those cockatrice eggs which, even here, as they leap into life, and begin to exert their fiery fangs, give terrible presage of coming shame and everlasting contempt?

No, reader, the Most High has so constituted the mind of man that the indulgence of the malevolent affections

[1] Moore's *Life of Byron*, 4to, vol. i. p. 357.

itself is misery; and of all the paths which at life's outset invite the inexperienced traveller, the surest to pierce through with many sorrows is the path of sensual indulgence. It is a vain attempt

> "With things of earthly sort, with aught but God,
> With aught but moral excellence, and truth, and love,
> To fill and satisfy the immortal soul."

But you are not mocked by your Maker. Those great and glorious objects exist for which He has given you an affinity, and towards which, in their most exalted intervals, the highest powers in your nature aspire. There is truth, there is goodness, there is God. There is the life of Jesus recorded in the Book; there is the Spirit of God now working in the world. Ponder that life till, associated with a living Redeemer, it shines around your path a purifying protecting presence. And pray for that Spirit, till under His kindly teaching you "taste and see that the Lord is good"—till expanded affections find an infinite object—till He who has thus strengthened your heart is become your portion for ever.

FEEDING SWINE.

"And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him."—LUKE XV. 15, 16.

To how much the portion of goods amounted which the younger son took with him we are not told; nor are we told how long it lasted. But once it is in the hands of a spendthrift, wonderful is the speed with which money disappears. As paragons of senseless profusion Dante has handed down the names of Stricca and his companions,[1] who sold their estates and bought a princely mansion where they might spend their days in revelry. Their horses' shoes were silver, and, if one came off, the servants were forbidden to pick it up; and, with like disdain of mean economy throughout, the united fortunes lasted only twenty months, and they finished off in the utmost misery. The Sienese spendthrifts have been often distanced in our living day; and the low taverns along the Thames, where our sailors waste their hard-won earnings—the hotels of Melbourne and San Francisco, where successful diggers fool away in a flash of riot the gold for which they have toiled so long, after a coarse and vulgar fashion could parallel the wildest waste of Heliogabalus or Lucullus.

[1] *Inferno*, canto 29.

More remarkable than the speed with which the money disappears is the small satisfaction which it yields. Here, in London, you can order a dinner at from five to seven guineas a head, and if there are ten guests their entertainment will cost you from sixty to eighty pounds. And everything shall be perfectly quiet and orderly—no excess, no noise, no revelry; but out of this large expenditure how much happiness have you created? Of the company perchance one or two, with a palate exquisitely educated, may appreciate the rare viands and rarer wines; and one or two more may tell it to the first acquaintance they meet next morning, subjoining—"But really I would as soon have dined at home;" and of the remainder some may regret the waste, or envy the wealth of the entertainer, or laugh at the vain show. Suppose that, instead of this feast for your rich neighbours, you were laying out the money in a treat to the poor; suppose you took a ragged school or the inmates of a workhouse to the seaside or the country—in the previous chapter we are told, "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just;"—without even waiting till then, you will find in the pleasures of the moment an anticipation of the final reward. Your guests may not make speeches, nor feel all of them exactly as you would have liked; but they have had a holiday and a wholesome meal. Away from mephitic dens, they have inhaled pure oxygen; eyes dull with looking at grey pavements and dusty yards have been refreshed with green fields, or have

sparkled at the boundless blue, and when their hearts were filled with food and gladness, words have been spoken, hymns have been sung, which helped to make them love God and their fellow-creatures more. The day will be a bright spot in a hundred memories, and a protracted feast to the giver of the festival.

From wasteful expenditure small satisfaction remains; but if, like the prodigal, your expenditure be on self-indulgence and excess, the more money the greater the misery. If you had stood on the bridge and dropped the sovereign straight down into the river, it would not have come back into your hand any more than the sovereign spent at the play with a jolly supper afterwards; but it would not have left a pain in your head, and a self-loathing in your spirit. If, like George Heriot with the king's acknowledgment, you had put the bank-notes on the hearth, and sent them flaming up the chimney, they would have left you far richer than those you have spent on reckless companions and riotous living. If, like Cleopatra, you had dissolved a pearl—if you had put together the income of years—all that has been spent on self-indulgence—perhaps in enticing others into sin,—could you have put it all together, and, like the queenly jewel, dissipated it in dust and air, we might have been sorry for the idle sacrifice, but the wasted money would not have wasted you. Cleopatra had another pearl, the gift of peerless beauty. That gift was perverted, and it hatched a serpent; it came back into her bosom—the asp which stung her. So with the possessions of the prodigal. Talents laid up in a napkin, pearls melted in vinegar, will

benefit no one; but rank, fortune, health, high spirits, laid out in the service of sin, are scorpion-eggs, and fostered and fully grown, the forthcoming furies will seize on the conscience, and with stings of fire will torment it evermore.

Whatsoever was the fortune which our spendthrift took into the far country, it was now exhausted. He knew what it was to come to the last shekel, and eat the last dry crust. He knew what it was to saunter along the street, and look wistfully in at doors and windows, and pass on with the painful knowledge that his pocket was empty. And it was astonishing how quickly his old companions found out his altered circumstances. Some who had lately feasted at his cost were seized with sudden blindness, and could not recognise him; and others, who used to have loads of leisure, were now in a perpetual hurry, and could only wave a flying "How do?" as they hastened past. And it might not be all hard-heartedness; for they were beginning to be badly off themselves. There had arisen a mighty famine, and whilst the poor were perishing, those not absolutely destitute were reduced to inferior fare and short allowance. Already—the last coin vanished—the prodigal had converted everything into bread: rings, chains, ornaments of every kind; and as, owing to the hard times, the market was glutted with such trinkets, it was little he obtained: and now, with a best robe or dress-coat in a bundle, or some such relic of his recent finery, he might be seen stealing up back alleys, or bashfully entering some dingy shop and asking a small advance from the hawk-faced

owner; till money, ornaments, apparel, everything, was eaten up, and still the wolf kept howling—still he felt as if he must perish with hunger. In desperation he threw himself on a wealthy citizen. Oh, how unlike his own kind father, this proud and surly pagan! and how unlike his own dainty fastidious self, this willingness to dig—this eagerness for drudgery! But anything to keep soul and body together: bid me do anything so as I may earn a morsel of food. "There, Moses, there are the hogs: go, feed the swine." Oh, yes; he will: his spirit is broken; there is no pride now. Utterly abject, unable to resent the bitter mockery which assigned such employment to a Jew, and amidst the unclean creatures feeling the isolation of the outcast, the self-contempt of the apostate and renegade, he drives forth to the field his loathsome charge.[1] But though there is food for the swine, there is none for him. The day is far spent, and his fast is not broken. No meal is brought out; no menial comes near him. It is plain he is forgotten; most likely on purpose. But these crooked pods, which the pigs are so greedily crunch-

[1] Remembering what Herodotus says as to the Egyptian detestation of swine and swineherds (ii. 47), the reader may think that there is an incongruity in making Egypt the scene of the prodigal's sojourn; but these animals figure on the remaining monuments of old Egypt, and the herdsman or driver as well, with his whip and his noose, as reproduced in the picture of Mr. Selous (see Wilkinson's *Manners and Customs of Ancient Egypt*, vol. iii. p. 34); and Herodotus himself assigns a use for them: if not permissible as food, they still were serviceable to the husbandman by treading the seed-corn into the soil left soft by the refluent river. The "husks" on which they were fed are the crooked, horn-like pods of the carob-tree, *Ceratonia siliqua*. It still grows abundantly in Egypt and the Holy Land. See "Husk" in Fairbairn's *Imperial Bible Dictionary*. The lover of Shakspeare will remember Orlando, "Shall I keep your hogs and eat husks with them? What prodigal portion have I spent that I should come to such penury?"—*As You Like It*, Act I. scene 1.

ing, do not look so bad, and he has seen them in the hands of the children and beggars. He tries them, but alas! so husky and hollow, they only mock his hunger. Faint and weary, for an instant he closes his eyes, and in his dream, behold, he eateth! but he awaketh, and his soul hath appetite. The landscape is a skeleton. Vegetation droops; the earth is iron; and, sickly and swooning, nature seems as if about to give up the ghost. It is the Far Country, and the Far Country in Famine.

Whether it be a natural nobleness, or an acquired refinement—the one, the direct gift of God; the other, an indirect creation of the gospel—it is seldom forfeited all at once. Step by step the downward path is trodden. The heart dies away from God. The prodigal goes forth from His presence; and, love being lost, fear soon follows. He does that which is good in his own eyes—works the will of the flesh and of the mind, and seeks his happiness in riotous living—in those forms of self-gratification which suit his temperament, whether that be animal or intellectual, coarse or æsthetic. Then comes a period of exhaustion and depression. The substance is wasted. Money and credit are gone, and the power of enjoyment is gone. Nerves are shattered, life is vapid, the old sensations pall. There is a famine in that land; and, in despair, he tries the husks which the swine do eat. He flies to fierce excitement and strong stimulants—betting, gambling, speculating, drinking; or, utterly demoralized, he becomes a bold beggar, fastening himself on any acquaintance or stranger who does not forcibly shake him off, glorying in his shame, amongst villanous associates boast-

ing his good connexions or his former respectability, and, snatching tit-bits from the swine-trough, shows how thorough is the transformation since he fell from his first estate.

In the days of the Regency there was a man much envied, and in the ranks of fashion his influence was paramount. It was not that he was a statesman or a hero, a thinker or a speaker; but, as far as an outside can make it, he was the gentleman. His bow, his gait, his dress, were perfection: the Regent took lessons at his toilette; when peeresses brought out their daughters, they awaited with anxiety his verdict, and no party was distinguished from which he withheld his presence. Very poor padding within, heartless and soulless, the usual sawdust which does for a dandy, by infinite painstaking and equal impudence he scrambled into his much-envied ascendency, the arbiter of taste, the dictator of the drawing-room, the leader of the great army of beaux and butterflies. Then came a cloud. The prince withdrew his favour, and, of course, the prince's friends. His mysterious wealth suddenly took wing, and means which he took to recover it sent him into life-long exile at Calais and Caen. He had no God.[1] His god was the sunshine

[1] A more godless existence than poor Beau Brummell's it is impossible to conceive. The ideas of accountability and worship do not occur, as far as we remember, in all the conversations and letters preserved in the two volumes of his biography. Even as consul at Caen he never so much as paid the mark of respect to the religion of his country implied in a visit to the English place of worship, and the chaplain, who often visited him in his last days, writes: —"He appeared quite incapable of conversing on religious subjects. . . . I never, in the course of my attendance upon the sick, aged, and dying, came in contact with so painful an exhibition of human vanity and apparent ignorance and thoughtlessness of and respecting a future state; for I have before

—court-favour, the smiles of the great and the gay. The instant these were withdrawn, the poor Apollo butterfly came fluttering down, down into the dust, and never soared again. It was all in vain that old acquaintances tried to keep him out of debt and discredit. With no gratitude, and with little conscience, and with only that amount of pride which makes the misanthrope, he begged and borrowed on all sides, at the *table-d'hôte* glad to get a bottle of wine from some casual tourist by telling stories of old times, and unable to cross the threshold when his only suit of clothes was in process of repair. The broken-down exquisite began to be in want, and, when borrowing a biscuit from a grocer, or a cup of coffee from a kindly hostess, he may have remembered the days when he lavished thousands on folly, the days when he was the favourite guest at the palace. Truly, it was a mighty famine, but it did not bring him to himself. It only alienated from mankind a heart which had all along been estranged from the living God, and gave frightful force to his cynicism. "Madame de St. Ursain," as he said to his landlady, "were I to see a man and a dog drowning together in the same pond, and no one was looking on, I would prefer saving the dog."

Just to take one instance more where the portion of

visited persons whose mental powers were equally shattered, but still it was possible to touch some chord connected with religion, to which they responded, though perhaps weakly and imperfectly: with him there was some response when sounded on worldly subjects, none on religious, until a few hours before he died, when, in reply to my repeated entreaties, that he would try and pray, he said, 'I do try,' but he added something which made me doubt whether he understood me."—Jesse's *Life of George Brummell*, vol. ii. p. 350.

goods was vilely cast away. More than fifty years ago, in the pleasant town of Tiverton, there was a clergyman, popular and clever, but by far too fond of field-sports. One day, however, a friend, a mighty hunter like himself, suddenly expired whilst uttering most impious language. The awe-struck minister abjured dogs and guns, and begging his people's prayers, vowed to live henceforward for his sacred calling. For months his preaching was earnest and impressive, but at the end of that time he resumed the sporting life with fresh devotion, and over and above betrayed a passion from which few are delivered. He had acquired a love for gaming. A presentation to Kew-cum-Petersham brought him to the neighbourhood of London, and gave him opportunity to frequent the gambling saloons of St. James's; and whilst numbers were reading with delight his *Many Things in Few Words*, poor "Lacon" himself was sitting far into the night among swindlers and pigeons, and then slinking home to a suburban hovel to sleep as best he could till far into the day. The upshot was, that he was forced to abscond, his living was declared void, and after leading a vagabond life between New York and Paris, the clergyman, the author, and the late fellow of King's, perished by his own hand at Fontainebleau.[1]

And whether it be Richard Savage, whose riotous living at last imbrued his hands in another's blood, and then landing him in the debtors' prison, left him to be buried at the cost of the kind-hearted jailer; or Emma,

[1] In 1832. There is a brief notice of Caleb Colton in Rose's *Biographical Dictionary*, and some interesting details are given by a fellow-townsman in the *Leisure Hour* for 1855, p. 42

Lady Hamilton, passing like a meteor through foreign courts, and making wise men mad with brilliancy and beauty, then cast off by society, and from a sordid lodging carried in a deal box to a nameless grave; or men like Beckford, who, spending prodigious wealth in self-idolatry, have lived to find that the idol was not worth the worship;—by cases which it would weary you to quote, we might show how invariably, if there be but time to work out the legitimate sequel, separation from God ends in desolation and sorrow. We might show how often the wayward child, who would not sit contented at the Father's board and eat the children's bread, has ended at the sty and been fain to clutch at husks which the swine do eat. And from the nature of the case, as well as the Word of God, we might show how inevitably the far country becomes a waste and howling wilderness, and how, soon or late, the soul which there abides must die of hunger.

But we weary you. You would rather hear something on the other side, and to that other side we gladly turn. And if self-seeking can never be suceessful—if separation from God is the death of the soul—if carelessness about others' welfare, not to say misanthropy, is misery, there can be little difficulty in deciding what is life and joy and peace.

Love to Christ is happiness. Our late friend David Sandeman was naturally of a sombre temperament; but when it pleased God to reveal to him the Saviour, it was a total transformation. It almost lifted him off the earth, and made him hold so lightly house and lands, and even

dear kindred, that he was saved, what is to some of us a sore distraction, a divided heart. The night when he was dying of cholera at Amoy a friend asked him, "Have you any pain?" and he answered, "The only pain I have known since I knew Jesus Christ is *sin*." "Have you any message to your friends?" "Tell them, it was only last night that the love of Jesus came rushing into my soul like the waves of the sea; so that I had to cry, Stop, Lord, it is enough. O the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, of the love of Jesus! and I was constrained to cry out—

> 'All too long have we been parted;
> Let my spirit speed to His.'"

Christ did not disappoint him. For His name's sake he had sought that far country, and very pleasant did he find the Master's service there. But the task was soon ended, and death was swallowed up in victory.

Harmony with God is happiness. You may feel, "I am not capable of such concentration. Mine is not a fervid or rapturous nature. It must be very blessed to feel like Sandeman, or rather to feel like Paul—For me to live is Christ. But with dispersive tastes and a desultory turn—fond of books, fond of friends, fond of travel—I despair of being ever drawn up to that height of devotion where One Object is the only spectacle, and love to Him the only feeling." But if love to Christ is the mainspring of Christianity, Christianity itself is the completion or renovation of our manhood—the emancipation from sin's dominion of the human nature—the "new" but original "creature" set free for the service of God and

for the enjoyment of all God-given happiness. Hear the testimony of one who for the best part of fourscore years had lived this life: "I have heard some say that 'worlds should not tempt them back to tread again life's dreary waste.' Such language is not for me. I should not shrink from the proposal of repetition. 'Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life.' My duties have not been burdening and irksome. My trials have been few compared with my comforts. My pleasures have been cheap and simple, and therefore very numerous. I have enjoyed without satiety the seasons and the sceneries of nature. I have relished the bounties of providence, using them with moderation and thankfulness. I have delighted in the means of grace; unutterable have been my delights in studying and perusing the Scriptures. How have I verified the words of Young—

'Retire and read thy Bible to be gay!'

I have seldom been without hearing of some instance of usefulness from the pulpit or the press. . . . I have a better opinion of mankind than I had when I began my public life."[1] Compare the dissenting minister with Beau Brummell—the one taking God's way of it, the other always taking his own:—the fop always scrambling after costly enjoyments, and finding them apples of Sodom in his grasp; the contented Christian avowing, "My pleasures have been very numerous, for they were cheap and simple;" the self-centred exquisite leading a life of perpetual envy and vindictiveness and spleen,—the unambitious and cheerful man of God radiating on others his

[1] *Autobiography of the Rev. W. Jay*, p. 158.

own bright, devout, and hopeful feelings, and so ending with an improved opinion of mankind, whilst the disappointed worldling finished off by saying that rather than save a man he would rescue a drowning dog.

To dwell on high is happiness. You may think Mr. Jay might well be cheerful, for he was healthy and active and free from all ailment. Hear then what Dr. Arnold says of his sister, long the victim of hopeless disease :— "I never saw a more perfect instance of the spirit of power and of love, and of a sound mind; intense love, almost to the annihilation of selfishness—a daily martyrdom for twenty years, during which she adhered to her early-formed resolution of never talking about herself; thoughtful about the very pins and ribbons of my wife's dress, about the making of a doll's cap for a child,—but of herself, save only as regarded her ripening in all goodness, wholly thoughtless; enjoying everything lovely, graceful, beautiful, high-minded, whether in God's works or man's, with the keenest relish; inheriting the earth to the very fulness of the promise, though never leaving her crib, nor changing her posture; and preserved through the very valley of the shadow of death from all fear or impatience, or from every cloud of impaired reason, which might mar the beauty of Christ's Spirit's glorious work." [1]

[1] *Life of Dr. Arnold*, letter 52, vol. i. p. 332.

A WISE RESOLUTION.

"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came to his father."

LUKE XV. 17-20.

To many a clever man God says "Thou fool!" He says it to the man who says "No God!"—who, with no father for his spirit, is content with an ape for his ancestor; or who, "corrupt and vile," has so embruted that spirit as to lose all memorial of his Maker, the echo in his conscience as well as the image on his soul. He says it to those who, forgetful of the great power of God, doubt if a resurrection be possible, or who, conceding the fact, show a needless solicitude as to the method, and, with officious anxiety, offer Infinite Wisdom their best advice. And He says it to those whose brilliant husbandry bursting their barns, they are forced to build greater; whilst in all their architecture they take no thought for eternal habitations, and spend neither skill nor effort on those harvests which alone God receives to His garner. And in many a history it is the first hopeful moment when a man says it to himself. That grey morning when David shouted from the hill-top, and held up the pitcher and

spear which he had carried off from the pillow of his sleeping persecutor, a gleam of good-feeling flitted over the spirit of Saul, and he exclaimed, "Return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm. Behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly." In confessing himself a fool, it almost looked as if Saul were becoming wise; and although the moody cloud soon returned and gathered in again, these flickering revivals of a better time leave a touching pathos round a tragedy otherwise so severe and sombre.

We have now reached a new stage in the history. Up to this time the prodigal had no quarrel with himself, and had never questioned the wisdom of his own procedure. He had exhibited forethought and shrewd calculation in the steps he took when leaving home. Instead of a penniless impulsive elopement he had curbed his impatience, and by securing his portion of goods he had provided for future enjoyment. And for anything we know, amongst his loose companions he may have been aught but a dolt or a dullard: "a fellow of infinite jest, and most excellent fancy." Nevertheless to a sound mind something more is needful than mere wit, sparkle, brilliancy, and for true wisdom a poor substitute is worldly knowing. This the prodigal began to feel. Excitement at an end, the portion of goods exhausted, swine for his companions, a churl for his master,—those stern realities, hunger, hardship, nakedness, brought him to himself, and to himself he said, "Thou fool!"

Where there is any nobleness in the nature, it occasionally happens that the very excess of riot leads to a revul-

sion. "I was converted by six weeks' debauchery," says a somewhat paradoxical character in fiction; and when the good minister remonstrates against his speaking thus lightly of the Divine operations, he replies, "I am not speaking lightly. If I had not seen that I was making a hog of myself very fast, and that pig-wash, even if I could get plenty of it, was a poor sort of thing, I should never have looked life fairly in the face to see what was to be done with it."[1] And when the Spirit of God enkindles or keeps smouldering on from better days any of the finer feelings, in the very sight of the swine-trough there is enough to sober and startle. Greek writers tell of a creature which combined every element of hideousness, and was capable of much mischief as well; but if by any chance it got a glimpse of itself, the face in the mirror was fatal—the sight of the monster slew the miscreant. The perfection of ugliness is evil, and if, like the basilisk, the sinner could only view his own deformity, it is a sight which self-complacency could never survive. We have known actual instances, and you may have known them, instances where there was a long course of levity and self-indulgence, but no remonstrance was effectual, till some crime was committed, and awakening all the furies, conscience shouted in a voice of thunder: instances where the heart was not given to God, but the life was so decorous that respectability said, "Thank heaven, I am not as other men!" till a fall into open sin killed the Pharisee, and extorted the cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner:" instances where no warning, no entreaty availed, till in

[1] *Felix Holt*, vol. i. p. 111.

sight of the swine-trough and its wallowing frequenters, the husks dropped from the hand of the prodigal, and he said, "I will arise and go to my father."

In bringing sinners to their right mind, the sobering influence which God most frequently employs is affliction. "Because they rebelled against the word of God, and contemned the counsel of the Most High: therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses." This history is repeated in almost every prodigal. The counsel of the Most High is contemned, the Father's house is forsaken; and for a time the sinner is allowed to fill himself with the fruit of his own devices. At first that fruit is pleasant—"fruit to be desired to make one wise,"—opening up new experiences, revealing new enjoyments: the golden apple, the magical mandragora, the Hesperian lotus, gloriously forgetful of home, of honour, and of duty; the Noachian cluster suffusing life with false glamour, and with the lie of the first forbidden fruit cajoling its victim, till the delusion dissipates, till the drunken hero wakes up in the pig-sty, till he to whose last consciousness sounded the whisper, "Thou art a god!" aroused by a box on the ear, sees scowling over him his terrible taskmaster—his demigod comrades transfigured into hogs, and his own fingers, lately bejewelled and daintily uplifting the goblet, in their gaunt grimy grasp no longer retentive of even such husks as the swine do eat.

If you have been forgetting God, or forsaking the

Father's house, the heart which prosperity hardens may be brought down by affliction; and you may well be thankful for the sorrow which sends you home. A man who had a praying wife was himself a drunkard. He was a gambler, and went to all the races within his reach, usually returning tipsy. Fond of fighting, he was withal a brutal husband, and often struck his wife. Beyond all this, as he wished that there was no God, he tried to persuade himself that there is none. There never was a bolder blasphemer. One night, when he was swearing dreadfully, his wife begged him to desist. "Tom," she said, "the Lord will strike you dead." "Who is the Lord?" he shouted, and then started off in oath after oath with the wildest imprecations, defying the Lord to touch him, vociferating and gesticulating till the perspiration stood upon his brow, and he sank down exhausted by his paroxysm of frantic impiety. For capturing a leviathan like this, you would have thought of an iron cable; you would have been for putting a tremendous hook in his nose. But the Lord had hold of him already. How? Through his excellent wife, you reply. Well, she lost her father, and on the Sabbath after the funeral she prevailed on her husband to accompany her to church. The sermon was on the depravity of man. He gnashed his teeth as he heard it, and with all his own corruption stirred to fury he turned on his poor helpmate as she came home, and, in her new mourning, kicked her down stairs. But a silken cord, if it be God's, will draw out leviathan—nay, with such a cord in the hand of a little child He can lead the lion. This brutal father had a

daughter two years of age, and out of the mouth of this babe the Lord often stilled the enemy and avenger. When coming home in a savage humour, and knocking about his helpless partner, the little Maria would scramble into her mother's lap, and with her pinafore wiping the tears, would gently bid her "Don't cry, mamma," and turning on him a reproving face, would say, "Ah! naughty papa, to make poor mamma cry." This little one he really loved, and this little one the Lord took. Soon after returning from her grave, the father was once more persuaded to enter a place of worship; and this time the word of the Lord found him. The parable of "The wise and foolish virgins" opened his eyes, and feeling that if he continued in his wickedness he must perish eternally, with all the earnestness of an awakened conscience he began to seek salvation. Night and day he sought it, often with crying and tears; and when at last the Saviour stood revealed before him, he consecrated life to His service, and has ever since proved a faithful follower and a valiant soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ.[1]

True, there are some whom the Lord brings to Himself in ways of wondrous gentleness; like the late saintly Cæsar Malan, whose account of his conversion was, "My heavenly Father awakened me with a kiss." But usually, where there have been great godlessness and recklessness, the "riot" is followed by a "mighty famine," and it is amidst the consternation of a sore calamity, or in the wilderness of affliction, that divine mercy overtakes and

[1] *A Brand plucked from the Burning* (1856). The author is now (1866) a zealous and useful clergyman of the Church of England.

brings home the wanderer. Towards the close of last century, one of the most gifted men in the Netherlands was a young physician at Dort; but to his Dutch industry he added French philosophy, and with his scientific resources and his energetic self-reliant genius, he discarded Christianity and felt no need for God. One day, however, in the capsizing of a boat, there sank into the weltering river his wife and only child, and in that overwhelming moment, poetry and philosophy could do no more to comfort him than the poor frightened ousel which flitted to and fro shrieking over the scene. The blackness of darkness engulfed him, but through the same chasm at which the flood rushed in and drowned his world there burst upon his spirit the claims of God, the guilt of the transgressor, the need of a Saviour; till after many a dismal day the rainbow of the covenant spanned the flood, and proclaimed the divine forgiveness. Very different from the experience of the gentle Genevese was the struggle towards the cross of this sturdy Hollander. After he had become a Missionary to the Hottentots, Vanderkemp's account of it was, "The Lord sprang upon me like a warrior, and felled me to the earth by one stroke of his arm."

Peradventure these pages may be turned over by some one whose life has hitherto been a course of self-pleasing, but to whom the days have come when he says, "I have no pleasure in them." You once were happy, you at least were gay; but you have lost your fortune, you have lost your popularity or your good position; you have lost that large fund of hilarity and animal exuberance which made up for every other lack; or, sadder still, there has been

taken away with a stroke the desire of your eyes, and now that the light of your life is extinguished, small is the joy which passing hours bring, faint the hope which the future awakens.

Yet, dear friend, if you are wise, from this very season may date the best and most blessed time in all your history. Like the passengers through the tunnelled Alp, from the dark and the cold and the stifling air emerging on the broad light-flooded plains of Lombardy, it is by a way which they know not, gloomy and underground, that the convoy is carried which God's spirit is bringing to the wealthy place; and your present grief you will have no reason to regret if it introduce you to God's friendship, and to joys which do not perish in the using. It may not have struck you, but you have been trying to create your own Eden, and it was an Eden with the living God left out. For a time the experiment seemed to prosper, but if it is blighted you have no right to complain; and though it should never blossom again, even the howling wilderness does you a service if it makes you a pilgrim and turns your face to the better land. Affliction is God's message. This mighty famine is no accident, it is God's voice sounding through the far country, and saying to you, COME HOME!

Yes, at this moment you are miserable. Disappointed with yourself, dissatisfied with your lot, in broken health, bereft of your dearest friend, you are in the position in which sooner or later every one will find himself who has placed his happiness in things created or things external. But even at this moment there are many outwardly less

favoured than you who are contented and cheerful. You are invited to join them. Will you not go? It is "bread" you need. You have fasted long, and your soul is weak: the word of God will give you strength and stamina. It is clothing you need. If not outwardly tattered, the inner man is in rags; God will clothe you with the robe of a Redeemer's righteousness, and will adorn you with the garments of the great salvation. It is shelter you need; you will find it in the Father's house. It is honourable employment you need; you will find it in the Father's service. It is love you need; you will find it in the Father's arms.

Prodigal son! prodigal daughter! has not God been very kind to you? Is there a good thing you possess which has not come from His hand? Is it not in Him that you have lived and moved and had your being? Who was it that through the eyes of your mother smiled over your cradle, and surrounded life's outset with love and endearment? Who was it that for your first tottering steps spangled the turf with the daisies of spring, and fanned your fresh face with its breezes? Who was it that in hushed and holy hours went on before you, through Sabbaths and hymns and Jesus' sweet name, alluring you to glory, honour, and immortality? and whose bright countenance was that which sometimes came so near your own, leaving a soft and pleasant glow, till one provocation after another rose up and darkened all the atmosphere and shut it out for ever? Oh, what a sin to go away from such goodness! what a sin to spend in self-pleasing the gifts of such bounty! what a sin to be a lover of pleasure rather than the lover of God!

Are you not sorry? In forsaking such a home and coming to this far country, have you not played the fool and erred exceedingly? In the life you have led, in the passions you have indulged, in the thorough estrangement of your heart from Infinite Excellence, do you not feel that you have sinned against heaven, and that you are no more worthy to be called God's child?

And will you not arise and go to your Father? Is it not wonderful that He should still desire your return? In His house there is bread and to spare, and He invites you home. Arise and go.

Sobered by his altered circumstances, the prodigal was brought to his right mind, and in the way in which he spoke of himself and his father he showed right feeling, and in the determination "I will arise and go to my father," he came to a right resolution; but the whole was crowned and completed by his taking the right step: "he arose and to his father he came." Instead of musing any longer, he started up and at once commenced his journey. Disgusted with the far country, its swine and its citizens, its harlots and riotous living, he instantly and for ever renounced them; and his heart full of shame and contrition and a timid tender hopefulness, he had already commenced his journey.

That promptitude saved him. If the kind Spirit of God now moves you, let no pretext detain you; but breaking away from every snare, in this propitious moment and with full purpose of heart give yourself to God. No time can be more opportune, and whilst God waits to be gracious all that the devil asks is delay.

A good many winters ago we were sent for to see an elderly man, far gone in his last sickness. He was in a wretched comfortless attic near Lincoln's Inn, but had once been an Edinburgh advocate. He told us his story. He had been engaged to an accomplished young lady. Her brother, a dashing officer in the army, and given to gambling, wanted some one to be his security for £2000. "It was always my misfortune," said the invalid, "to be of a soft and yielding nature, and I at last consented. The money was not forthcoming, neither could I pay it. As a ruined man, I could not lift up my head in the Parliament House, and the lady to whom I hoped to be married broke off the engagement, and I never saw her again. After spending some time in the country in a moping melancholy way, I came to London nearly thirty years ago." Then after mentioning how, through the late Mr. Lockhart, he had obtained literary employment, amongst other things publishing a romance, and for a considerable time editing a magazine, in these latter years he had been engaged on a long-projected dictionary of the Bible: "for although I had no real religion, I wished to have it. I had a good mother, and I had seen pious people in my youth, and I hoped that by being always engaged about the Bible, I might, some time or other, be brought under its saving influence. I spent six years compiling that dictionary, and it was quite a labour of love: but I cannot say that it answered the more important purpose; for in the literary part of my task I got so absorbed as to have no time for the spiritual." The manuscript, however, was lost. "I was paralysed. At sixty years I could not begin again. The sun of my

existence had gone down, and neither object was accomplished. I was not to be allowed to publish a book which I thought readers of the Bible would welcome, and I had failed to find for myself the pearl of great price. I seemed like one bewitched. In order to earn a crust of bread, I have sat down on a summer's morning, intending to write a story for the magazines, and I have folded the paper and dipped the pen and held it in my fingers till it dried; and I have dipped it again, hoping that the thought would come, and gone on in this way till the sun went down, without ever marking the paper. Then I grew so weak that I could not come up these stairs except on my hands and feet, and by and by I could not come up at all: and for the last three weeks I have not left this bed, and now they tell me I am dying." Then he burst into tears as he told how he had often come to our own and other churches, and been "almost persuaded" to close with Christ; but he did not tell what had hindered. From other sources we learned that there were besetting sins which kept him back, and from which even for his soul's salvation he could never break away. So there for many years he had stood spell-bound on Balaam's pinnacle, envying the righteous, but never joining their company: a prodigal who knew about the Father's house, but whose "soft and yielding nature" after arising always sat down again; an example of that remissness which lets slip life's long opportunity, perpetually promising that some future day shall be the day of decision, till at last in the shadow of death the last gleam of hope disappears from its eyes.

So you who are still the prodigal, in this lucid interval

be entreated, and at once arise. Take leave of every sin: especially in strength of God's own giving flee away from the sin which more easily besets you. And go to God. It is the reign of grace. You are still in the world where pardon may be found. God has not let you go. He has not forgotten you. It is His voice which calls you. It is His Spirit which is striving with your spirit. Notwithstanding all that you have done, He has not yet cast you off for ever. The cord of His love has still hold of you—that cord of compassion, overstrained, ever-lengthening, which you are doing the utmost to sever. Oh, yield at last to God's mercy, and let these bands of love draw you home!

And take with you words. "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. A rebel and a runaway, I am no more worthy to be called thy child. With a heart so depraved, dare I hope that a holy God can have any pleasure in me? and after the life I have led may I look for forgiveness? But with God there is mercy, and although utterly unworthy, I come to thee in the name of that beloved Son who always pleased the Father, and who came on the Father's behalf to seek and to save that which was lost. I believe the faithful saying. Lord Jesus, who didst come into the world to save sinners, save me. God and Father of our Lord Jesus, magnify the riches of thy grace and the merits of thy dear Son; pity and pardon me. Make me as one of thy hired servants. Weary of wandering, take me into Thy house. Weary of self-pleasing, let me taste the blessedness of new obedience. Other lords have had dominion over me: henceforth let me be called by Thy name."

A HAPPY MEETING.

"But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."—LUKE XV. 20-24.

To the mediation of the Lord Jesus we owe all our hopes and all our happiness. Including, as it does, satisfaction for sin, a matchless exhibition of Divine compassion, and the introduction into our fallen world of that celestial energy which raises to a new and noble life those who were dead in trespasses; it has not only removed every barrier in the way of the transgressor's return, but has made the path of life so open and attractive, that the most simple have found it, the most wayward have been induced to enter, the feeblest have been carried through.

In that mediation so pre-eminent is the work of atonement that in the eye of many a reverent beholder it has left small space for other objects, even as it has left no need for further manifestations; and with the impatience of gratitude, with the intolerance of an absorbing affection, they denounce, as beside the purpose, all teaching

which has not for its theme express and exclusive, "Christ crucified."

But right and true as is that sense of sin which nothing can relieve except "the blood of sprinkling," and glorious as shines the cross in the forefront of the gospel, it is no honour to the Lord Jesus, and it is an injury to ourselves, to forget the great lesson of His life, or ignore those other scriptures, without whose light a darkness deeper than was over all the land from the sixth hour even unto the ninth, would still encircle Calvary.

As mediator the Lord Jesus was the manifestation of God. The Divine Son, dwelling in the bosom of Deity, He plainly showed the Father.[1] Not only did He bring the Father's message, but on the great axiom "I and the Father are One," here in the midst of men He lived out the Father's life, the Father's truth, and tenderness, and love. In Moses the law—the sanctity—had come already, but the graciousness of God came in Jesus Christ;[2] and in all things like-minded, the very feelings and dispositions of the Father shone in His countenance and breathed in His accents, surrounding His person with a sacred attraction, and with a winsome authority inspiring His words: so that when to the heavy-laden He said, "Come unto me," we know that with like "grace and truth" the Father invites us: so that when on the cross He exclaimed, "Father, forgive," we know that the prayer was addressed not to a Deity distant, inexorable, hostile, but to that God who so loved the world that He gave his Son, and who, in order to answer the prayer in a righteous

[1] 1 Tim. iii. 16; Heb. i. 2; John i. 18, xiv. 9. [2] John i. 17.

forgiveness, had surrendered the Best-beloved to this sorrow.

What, then, is the Divine disposition toward sinners here on earth? Assuming God's infinite purity, how far is He ready to pardon? Acknowledging that there is but one sacrifice for sins, what is the extent of the Divine propitiousness? Viewed in the light of the Incarnate Sufferer, what is the language of the cross? Now that I would fain break off my sinful life, and give myself to God, how soon and on what terms may I hope for acceptance? Must I first prove my sincerity by a long purgation? or may I come as I am? Must I do something to mitigate the Divine displeasure? or already reconciled in His Son, is it so that God actually waits to be gracious?

To such questions, although not a formal reply, this parable is an abundant answer.

It was near the close of Christ's ministry, and a characteristic company had assembled. They were "publicans and sinners." Attracted by that strange fascination which drew towards Infinite Purity self-conscious pollution, many such had by this time sought out the Saviour;[1] and by that wonderful word, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," dissolved into broken-heartedness, and made to hunger after

[1] "Christ, standing here for us as the representation and revelation of this Divine love, tells us that whilst it is not caused by us, but comes from the nature of God, it is not turned away by our sins. 'This man, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him,' says the unloving and self-righteous heart, 'for she is a sinner.' Ah! there is nothing more beautiful than the difference between the thought about sinful creatures which is natural to a *holy* being, and the thought about sinful creatures which is natural to a *self-righteous* being. The one is all contempt; the other all pity."—*Sermons*, by A. Maclaren p. 33.

righteousness, they clung to that society which promised to fulfil their aspirations. And now that before His last journey to Jerusalem a number of them had once more gathered around Him, the publicans and sinners drew near, and outside the throng, separate and self-respecting, stood the Scribes and Pharisees. As they surveyed the inner circle, with its rags, with its disreputable characters, with its wild faces still carrying signs of former ruffianism, they marvelled; and as rapt looks and tear-filled eyes were met by gentle words and the expansive sunshine of a gratified beneficence, they could not comprehend the manifest affinity which drew together the Great Teacher and the refuse of Galilean society: "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." To meet this natural feeling—for the feeling must be natural: taken up and passed on by decent reputable people, the murmur which the Pharisees set up has lasted for eighteen hundred years—the Lord Jesus spake three parables. They were an argument from analogy. As against the feeling of Pharisaism, they appealed to the instincts of mankind; and of the last of the series the purport has thus been given:—

"In my Father's eyes, these sinners, with whom you say I associate too freely, are not what they are in yours. You regard them as outcasts;—He would have them to be sons. He looks upon them as lost children whom He would fain recover to Himself. His purpose is that I, the Son of his love, should be the first-born among many brethren. And it is among these sinners that I am to find my brethren. These sinners, each and all of them, my Father longs to embrace, as any father worthy of the

name would embrace a long-estranged child coming back to him again. He has sent me to seek and save them; —to reveal him to them as a Father, waiting to welcome them as sons. How think ye? Do I best carry out my Father's purpose by treating them after the manner you would have me treat them,—as the offscouring of the earth,—or by treating them as my Father's children and my brethren?—so treating them all, including the very vilest of them—even those who have sunk almost to the level of the hungry wallowing swine? . . . Thus viewed, the parable warrants the widest and most unrestricted proclamation of the fatherhood of God as now, in his Son, brought within the reach of all,—to be pressed on the acceptance of all,—with the strongest possible assurance that all are welcome, freely welcome, to have the full enjoyment of all that is implied in it, if they will,—when they will."[1]

To which we only add that in as far as they are a disclosure of the Divine disposition towards the sinner, this and the two companion parables are pervaded by one principle. There are some seekers—yes, and finders—who have not first been losers. The merchantman seeks for goodly pearls, and finds one of transcendent value: the farmer seeks for nothing, but sauntering through his field or upturning the soil, he stumbles on a treasure; and both are delighted; both are filled with the utmost glee in this sudden access of fortune. Without ever having lost, they have found. But here is a shepherd far out in the desert. Looking anxiously for footprints, listening

[1] Candlish on the *Fatherhood of God*, 2d edition, pp. 199, 200.

for anything like a cry from thorny copse or caverned vale, brushing the perspiration from his brow, and when ready to give up roused to fresh effort by a little flock of wool suspended from that trailing brier : it is of no use to tell him that he has five score at home quite as good as the wanderer; nor would you altogether cure his sorrow though from your own fold you offered the best equivalent : for this one was his own ; he knew it by its name ; it used to go out and in and follow him : and it is only in the late evening, as you meet him with the weary truant on his shoulder, that he calls out, "Rejoice with me : I have found my sheep which was lost." Much the same with a lost piece of money, still more anxious is the search for a lost child, and matchless is the joy in his recovery. When not long ago the three little children were lost in the Australian wilderness, you remember how sympathy brought all the neighbours to the search—how every spot of softer earth, how every tuft of grass, was questioned for its tale ; and how, without ever counting the cost, or grudging the interruption of their own affairs, the gallant men could not leave the track as long as a ray of hope remained. But who can conceive parental anguish as day after day of that dreary week passed on, and the bread was bitter because they could not share it with their famished offspring away in the hungry scrub, and sleep was terrible, because each new waking revealed the empty cribs or the cold silent sky? And who can paint the rapture as the final night disclosed them nestled under the over-arching broom, beneath the feathers of the Almighty, and the faint "Father!" from the first who

waked assured their earthly sire that he had children still?

These are the sentiments and experiences to which the Saviour appeals. To alight on a pearl or piece of money is always agreeable; but if it was one that you had lost, the anxiety of the search gives a peculiar zest to the discovery. If there was joy in the household when it was said, "There is a son born into the world,"—in after years should he be stolen from the threshold, or should he wander away, proportionate to the dismay created by his disappearance and the sorrow with which he has been sought, will be the rapture with which loyal retainership shouts the news of his return and the awful joy with which affection clasps him in its arms. So here, with amazing condescension, Christ represents Himself and the Father as "seeking that which was lost." True, the sheep may have lost itself: the prodigal may have shown vile ingratitude and done very shamefully in going away: but still, to the shepherd it is a grief to lose his sheep; to the parent it is a grief to lose his child; to God it is a grief to lose the soul made after His own image, and in which He rejoiced with a Creator's complacency and more than a parent's tenderness; and because He is a loser, the Most High becomes a seeker. Into the far country His love follows the elect soul, and the embrace of a joyful forgiveness awaits the returning wanderer.

What can be more encouraging? If you have led a sinful life, and are now ashamed and weary of it, wheresoever else you are welcomed or repulsed, if you arise and go to God He will receive you graciously and will abun-

dantly pardon. All His assurances are to the same affecting tenor: "He is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish." "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways." And here He is represented as the merciful Father whose pity survives the longest provocation, and whose love is such that when the profligate at last returns no high-born revulsion hinders, but at once He presses the tattered swineherd to His bosom. Such is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, and if you are wise you will let no cold suspicions or subtle casuistry cheat you out of the strong consolation. You cannot err in believing what the Lord Jesus says; you cannot err in doing as He directs. Be assured that God "is as kindly disposed as in this parable He is represented to be. The calls, invitations, promises which He has given us in the gospel, mean the utmost of what they express; and God is as earnestly desirous that sinners should return to Him, and as much pleased when they actually return, as the strongest language of the gospel declares."[1]

True: God is infinitely holy, and sin is His abhorrence. But the great sin is departure from the living God, and this never ceases till once you return. And if you yourself long to be holy, it is in forgiveness that the fresh start, the new obedience, begins: if you would escape from the bondage of corruption, you must retreat into the home of God and gain the glorious liberty of His children.

True: God is holy, but that will not hinder His receiving you. Holiness means the highest form of all

[1] Dwight's *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 89.

excellence, and every excellence in completest harmony; and now that, through the satisfaction of the Saviour, there is in the Divine truth and rectitude no obstacle to the justifying of the ungodly, to Holiness itself it is a joy to put away sin and pass by the remnant of transgression. In the condemnation of the offender sin is punished; but it is only in the salvation of the sinner that sin is destroyed. And as it was in order to destroy the devil's destruction that the Son of God was manifested, in every soul which is restored into the paths of righteousness an incalculable career of wickedness is cut short, and a joy unspeakable is given to that holy Saviour who, in cancelled guilt and arrested evil, sees the travail of His soul. Therefore fear not to make the grand experiment; cast yourself on the grace of God in Jesus Christ, and you will find that there is no pity like the compassion of Infinite Purity. You will find that there is no love like God's own charity —that love omnipotent which, in saving a soul from death, not only covers but annihilates the multitude of sins. And if to a guilty conscience there is no holdfast so firm as the horns of God's altar, now that a new and living way has thrown it open, you will find that for a sin-burdened spirit there is no asylum so kindly, so secure, so inviting, as the very Holy of Holies.

Therefore we say again: Take with you words, and return to the Lord. Say exactly what you feel. If you are not prepared to part with all sin, you are no penitent; you are still the prodigal. But if your sin is your sorrow, let neither past evil nor present imperfection prevent your return. The younger son was still "a great way off" when the father saw him, and was still in his rags when

that father kissed him. And whilst you cannot feel too keenly, do not wait for feeling. It is right to be lowly. To "blush and be confounded" before God, to "weep and be in bitterness," is no more than the feeling which guilt should awaken; and till you have sought and found forgiveness, you do well to be anxious. As Bunyan felt after his conscience awoke, when he saw people much cast down about the loss of wealth or near relations: "Lord, what ado is here about such little things! if they so labour after, and shed so many tears for the things of this present life, how am I to be bemoaned, pitied, and prayed for! My soul is dying, my soul is damning. Were my soul but in a good condition, how rich would I esteem myself, though blessed but with bread and water!" No sorrow for the past can be too poignant; but do not wait for that sorrow. If the prodigal had not arisen till he was satisfied with his own repentance, he would have died in the far country. But the tears which do not flow from the gaunt eyes of famine, will come unbidden at the feast of fat things; and the fountains of the great deep, which freeze in the winter of remoteness and estrangement, will break up and brim over in the sunshine of Mercy. The word which you take, be it what it may, "Father, I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called thy son:"

> "Dear Lord, I ask no crown from Thee,
> No robe with rich perfume;
> The meanest place will do for me,
> And in the lowest room:"

"Take away iniquity, and receive me graciously;" whatsoever be the word, let it be a true one, and swifter than

your return will be the footsteps of forthcoming pardon; and great as may be your own joy in rescuing and restoring grace, no less will be the joy in heaven over your repentance.

The relation which the Most High sustains to His intelligent and accountable creatures is too comprehensive and too intimate to be perfectly imaged by any earthly tie; but in the relation which runs through this parable it finds its nearest equivalent. And what amongst ourselves is fatherhood? It is that relation which identifies greatness with littleness; which makes it quite natural that the arm which wields the battle-sword should gently rock the sleeping babe; which secures from contempt the master of sentences, the sage, the orator, though he babble idle rhymes in his infant's ear. It is that relation which lives in the loved one's joy or honour, and which is wounded in his grief or his disgrace; which feels no pride like a son's promotion, and which, gazing at the blood-stained garment, cries, "It is my son's coat! an evil beast hath devoured him; I will go down to him in the grave sorrowing;" but which would rather that the evil beast had devoured him, than that he should live to blight his principles or forfeit a virtuous fame. It is that relation amongst men which toils and denies itself, and does not grudge the long journeys and the sleepless nights which enable the father to lay up for the children; and both in heaven and earth, it is that relation which delights in being trusted, and which desires to be loved in return; which cannot be asked too many favours, or be intrusted

with too many confidences; which seeks one gift only, "My son, give me thine heart," and hears no language more pleasing than, "My Father, thou art the guide of my youth. Father, forgive my trespasses, and give me this day my daily bread."

Wonderful is parental affection, and wonderful the love of God. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." "Like as a Father;" but how is that? You see yonder dusky tents along the stream, and knots of cattle grazing on the neighbouring hills; but the chieftain stays at home. In the cradle lies the babe whom a foster-mother is bringing up; for his own mother died on the day when he was born: and hand-in-hand with his widowed sire walks a little boy, full of love, full of notions bright and strange, asking hard questions, telling dreams: till a sudden change comes across the scene, and in the effort to be a playmate to Rachel's little son, for a moment the patriarch forgets his cares and griefs, and, as men would say, his dignity. How is it that a father pitieth his children? An old king is seated at the city gate. Not far away a battle is going forward—a battle on which hangs the monarch's crown, perhaps his very life. And there is panic through the town—the helpless running to and fro and the fearful looking forth of those who think they already see their houses in the flames and red slaughter rushing through the streets. But now, posting towards the city, are seen the little clouds—the dust of separate couriers—and all rush to hear the tidings. "All 's well!" exclaims the first; "Victory!" shouts the second; but with fierce impatience demands the monarch, "Is the young man Absalom safe?"

and transfixed by the fatal truth, in his cry of anguish the cheers of exultation suddenly subside, and as he staggers up to his solitary chamber, the joyous crowd fall silent, and even the conquerors, when they at last return, like the perpetrators of a crime slink through the gate crest-fallen. How is it that a father pitieth his children? For long there has been only one son at home, and you might suppose there never had been more than one: all is so complete and orderly, and the new-come servants and the neighbours never speak of any other. But along the high-road there is this instant travelling a gaunt and haggard figure; his filthy tattered clothing showing little trace of bygone foppery, and in his looks not much to betoken gentle breeding: so shabby and so reprobate, that those who pity common beggars shake the head or slam the door on this one. But though the dogs bark at him, and charity turns away from him; though the meanest hut rejects him, and though the passengers scowl at his petitions, one heart awaits him, and keeps for him the original compartment warm, ample, and unfilled. Yonder, as he has surmounted the summit of the hill, and is gazing down on the long-forsaken homestead, and hesitating whether he may venture nearer, what quick eye is that which has recognised him a great way off, and what eager step is this which runs so fast to meet him? and who is this that in the folds of his kingly mantle hides the ragged wanderer, and clasps him to his bosom, and weeps upon his neck the tears of enraptured affection, and cuts short his confession with a call for the best robe and a command for instant festival? Oh, what a love is that which the heavenly Father hath unto His children!

THE BEST ROBE.

"But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet."—LUKE XV. 22.

FROM the excellent glory came the voice, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." Obedient to that voice we listen to the Lord Jesus, and we learn the mind of God. We learn His graciousness, His forgivingness, His all-comprehending care and kindness; and taken by the hand we are introduced into His presence, and are taught to say, Abba, Father. Owing to our sinfulness we are very unbelieving, and therefore it takes a long time to learn the lesson; but, encouraged by so kind an intercessor, the experiment is repeated and repeated, till, enriched by faith, awe ripens into filial reverence, and tormenting fear is cast forth by perfect love.[1]

We obey God when we listen to Jesus; and Jesus says, "Suffer the little children to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." If we ourselves have come to love the Saviour, it should be our great effort to endear Him to our children; and the way in which He has taught us to think and feel about God, is the way in

[1] Matt. xvii. 5, xviii. 22, vi. 9; Gal. iv. 6; 1 John iv. 18.

which we should try to get them to think and feel towards our Father who is in heaven.

The very effort will be a great blessing to ourselves. You who are a Christian parent will acknowledge that of all your educators your own children have proved the most influential, and you will allow that to a thoughtful man the true finishing school is his own family. Even although a preacher of the Word or a doctor of divinity, you here find the tables turned; and with the watch which you must set upon your lips, and the faultless conduct you are expected to maintain, you find yourself once more under tutors and governors; the solitary pupil in the centre of an acute and observant faculty; a scholar posed by the Gamaliels at your feet; a puzzled Solomon whose queen of Sheba has just descended from the nursery with dolls and hard questions. And it is well. Your turn is too abstract. With you the truths of Revelation are too much the propositions in a system or the tenets of a creed: the little child has no turn for abstractions; to him these doctrines are the sayings of God, or they are nothing; and rather than live in a pale ghost-land of dogmas, he will impersonate attributes and propositions; like the apostle, will clothe in flesh and blood, Faith, Hope, and Charity; like the Psalmist will give life to Veracity and Mercy, and be glad to see sundered friends, like Righteousness and Peace, embracing one another. And it is well to see truth through the limpid eye of childhood, before the life has gone out, before the glory has gone off, but just as it comes from God; and in concert with such unsophisticated students it is good to open

up a text and let out the fragrance and the sweetness which in the handling of conventional exegetics are so apt to be sacrificed for the sake of the structural anatomy. Above all, it is well to have such an incentive to personal consistency. In one sense idealists, children are also realists; but nominalists they never are. They will not mistake words for things, nor accept profession in lieu of practice. You are sometimes forced to say—

> "The man
> Is worthy, but so given to entertain
> Impossible plans of superhuman life.
> He sets his virtues on so raised a shelf,
> He has to mount a stool to get at them;
> And, meantime, lives on quite the common way,
> With everybody's morals."[1]

In such transcendental ethics children have no faith, and the only lesson which impresses them is the one brought down to their own level—the lesson which is lived. If you want them to be truthful, you must never "use lightness" yourself, nor make a promise which you have no intention to fulfil. If you wish them to be fair and honourable in their transactions with one another, the court of appeal must judge righteous judgment and show no respect of persons. If you would like them not to lose their temper, you must keep your own. "Walk before me, and be thou perfect," was God's charge to Abram; and "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart," was the Psalmist's resolution; and success in the one sphere is a good test of sincerity in the other; for next to the All-seeing Himself, there are no observers

[1] *Aurora Leigh*, p. 216.

so perspicacious and so candid as those little ones whom it is so woful to offend. Let therefore the living God be to you what you desire and pray that He should be to them: your fear and your dread, and yet your exceeding joy; your Guardian and Guide; your Father and Friend.

Wonderful is the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes prospering parental effort, sometimes with small outward advantage in the way of example or instruction, in many an infant mind He has enkindled a sweet and most natural piety; and although, as too often happens, blown out in the world's rough weather, so that for successive years there is nothing left but the smouldering wick—the smoking flax of unavailing regret and abortive resolutions—when the set time comes He has only to take the begrimed and battered lamp, and pouring in new oil, with benignant afflatus breathe over it, till, like an incorruptible seed, the feeble spark, the fiery germ, flame up a burning and a shining light; whilst other and happier instances occur, in which the good work has experienced no marked interruption, but the fair promise of childhood has strengthened into youthful piety, and manly decision, and mature devotion: instances like Josiah and Timothy, like Jeremiah and John the Baptist; instances like Melanchthon, where, early sanctified, the clear intellect and calm loving heart grew equably together; instances like John Livingstone, where, never having tasted aught else than that the Lord is gracious, some experience of His terrors had to be entreated as a favour· instances like that described in the touching lines—

"O God! who wert my childhood's love,
My boyhood's pure delight,
A presence felt the livelong day,
A welcome fear at night;—

I could not sleep unless Thy hand
Were underneath my head,
That I might kiss it, if I lay
Wakeful upon my bed.

And quite alone I never felt,—
I knew that thou wert near,
A silence tingling in the room,
A strangely pleasant fear.

With age Thou grewest more divine,
More glorious than before;
I feared Thee with a deeper fear,
Because I loved Thee more."[1]

Whilst such examples are a great incentive to pious teachers and parents, the other class may well encourage those who go forth to the far country and try to reclaim the prodigal. Even amongst those who have sinned the worst and sunk the lowest, there are few who cannot recall a better time, and not a few can recall a good and hopeful beginning. In one respect yours is a great advantage. You were not born a heathen. Your childhood was not a religious blank, nor was your infant imagination filled with hideous pagods; but in "the Lord your Shepherd," in the "gentle Jesus, meek and mild," you looked up and saw a Pity and Protection which it is still touching to remember. Although so sadly fallen, there was once a time when you seemed not far from the kingdom, and degraded though you be, you can still recall a father's house and the beauty of its

[1] F. W. Faber.

holiness. At the same time, your case is very critical. Grace resisted, advantages abused, are but a deeper condemnation, and if you die impenitent and unsaved, in the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for pagans than for you.

These latter years have been godless. They have been given to self-seeking and the pursuit of pleasure; in the language of Scripture, they have been spent in "working the will of the flesh and of the mind." But although you have forgotten God, He has not lost sight of you. Even amidst the riotous living His grieving eye has followed you, and the sore destruction, which your sins provoked, long-suffering grace withheld. And now there is in the far country a famine. Health has failed; your post or employment is lost; a dear friend, the desire of your eyes, has been taken away; and amidst the solitary musings of this desolate season, a still small voice keeps passing up and down the chambers of memory, and, in tones not unfamiliar, it recalls the happier time. It is the voice of God. It says, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings;" and if you are wise you will at once arise and go.

You would fain arise, you say, but you cannot. You are in the arms of a giant. You are in the grasp of a strong and terrible temptation, which holds you fast and will not let you go. You have tried to escape, but it was sure to rush after you like an armed man, and strike you down, and carry you captive once more.

A mournful admission! and yet, if you are in earnest, you need not despair. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth

violence, and the violent take it by force." When Alfieri's literary ambition was effectually aroused, the great obstacle to progress was a worthless companion. Such was the sorcery of this man's society, that books and vows withstood in vain; and scholarship, patriotism, literary distinction, would have been ignobly forfeited, had it not been for the iron will which a noble incentive supplies. Chained to his desk, at least bound to his chair, and with his hair cropped so as to cut off communion with the fashionable world, he pursued his studies, and in a few weeks the frenzy was thoroughly conquered. Hard was the fight, but it gained the laurel crown. Your aim is higher. More important interests cannot be conceived than those which your present infatuation imperils. Glory, honour, and immortality are now in your offer; God's friendship here, and eternal life hereafter; and of all the wild exchanges which have ever been made since Esau sold the land of promise for a mess of pottage, yours will be the wildest, who for these mean and momentary delights cast away the joys of a deathless duration. Nor is there any need. For a hard conflict, a life-or-death struggle, there may possibly be need; but there is no need for surrender. Stronger than Satan is the Son of God, and a struggle in His strength is sure to prevail; and as you would not have life's remainder degraded, embittered; as you would not blush to meet that noble army of martyrs who resisted unto blood, striving against sin; as you would not in a lost eternity be the derision of devils and the victim of ceaseless self-upbraidings,—entreat the merciful help of the Most High, and from

this moment forward shun the path of your destroyer; or should he from cunning ambush spring on you unawares, cry mightily to God, who is able to deliver, with a mind made up, that rather than sin it is good to suffer, it would be gain to die.

Says another, "I have arisen; at least I think I have. I would fain come to the Father, but I know not the way. It is now a long time since I first felt anxious about my state; but although I have never missed my prayers, and have read the Bible and many good books, I do not feel as if I had made much progress. I have no love to God, no enjoyment of religion. I sometimes despair of ever getting to the Father's house, and I often feel as if, after all the pains I have taken, I had been only wandering up and down in the far country."

All that we are told of the prodigal is, "He arose, and came to his father." We are not told how many days or weeks were spent on the way home; but in the case of some it has proved a long and toilsome pilgrimage. From the moment that Augustine arose and left the swine-trough, it was six years before he found himself in the Father's house; and fleeing from the wrath to come, energetic natures like Luther and Bunyan had to fight their path through months of toil and terror, and before they came to peace with God were wearied in the greatness of their way.

In such instances sovereign wisdom overruled for good the sharpness of the ordeal, the tedium of the journey; just as in the long-run it proved all the better for Israel that the fortnight's march from Egypt to Canaan spread

out into forty years. But if the traveller is ignorant or wayward—if he has no clear idea of the route, or wastes his time in desultory episodes and refuges of lies—a narrow interval may yield space sufficient for a weary irksome wandering.

And truly it is a narrow interval which divides the Father and the prodigal, the Saviour and the sinner. One day when Joseph Milner, the church historian, was preaching at Ferriby, near Hull, there was present in the audience a man fifty years of age, who had led a life of great and open wickedness. The sermon was from the text, "The hour is coming when all that are in their graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." The conscience of the old profligate was awakened. His life had been spent in doing evil, and at the prospect of the coming judgment he trembled. Of a Saviour he never thought, for he felt that sins like his could never be forgiven; and he could only wish that the race had been extinguished in Noah's flood, so that he himself had never been. Weeks passed in misery. He tried to repent. He tried to soften that hard heart of his; but all in vain: it lay "like a ball of iron" within him. At last he called on the preacher, and, as well as he could, described his feelings. Mr. Milner listened, and then replied: "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us. In Christ's stead we pray you, Be ye reconciled to God." He then added: "I now stand in St. Paul's place, and I beg you to believe

this invitation. I beg you to accept the pardon of all your sins, which Christ has purchased for you, and which God freely bestows on you for His sake." William Howard stared. "Dear sir, how can I believe that God should invite a sinful wretch like me to be reconciled to him?" and although Mr. Milner pointed out the passage, and explained how God's ways are not as our ways, he was by no means satisfied. He thought Mr. Milner's copy of the Bible could hardly be correct; but when he went home, and in his own Testament read the self-same words, he sank into a sort of swoon of blissful wonder. Here on the one side was a hell-deserving wretch, a horrible transgressor: there on the other was the God of grace opening heaven's door and inviting him to enter. That night was spent in singing the praises of the Saviour who had purchased his pardon, and the holy humble walk of his ten remaining years was another illustration of the truth, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."

Said one of our Scottish worthies, "I have seen a great wonder to-day. I found a woman in a state of nature, I saw her in a state of grace, and now she is in a state of glory." Were it given to every one to apprehend as clearly and appropriate as eagerly the blessings within their reach as this poor woman to whose bed-side the steps of the minister were directed, there would be few joyless lives, few tortuous, tiring, self-repeating pilgrimages. "I am the way," says the Lord Jesus. "No man cometh to the Father but by me." As soon as you place yourself in the Saviour's hands, you are practically home. Faith in Christ is peace with God.

Some people once lived in a happy isle, but for their misdeeds were banished. The place of their exile, however, lay within sight of their former home. They could look across the channel and discern the beach, with its border of golden sand, and the hills beyond, with their emerald slopes and cool snow-capped summits. Occasionally, too, in the stiller weather, they could hear voices from that land: the shout of happy playmates; the tinkling tune of browsing flocks, or the mellow peal summoning to welcome worship. Their own was a land of emptiness. From the brackish bog sprouted a few dingy weeds, and the glairy stems, or mallows among the bushes, were the food of the gaunt inhabitants. Few had any desire to leave, or any hope of bettering their condition. One exception we may notice. He was a thoughtful character. With those deep melancholy eyes, which take so much for granted, and which seldom kindle to the fullest—for they have looked the world through and through, and seen an end of all perfection—glimpses of a noble soul could at times be caught, as it climbed to the window of his wan and wistful countenance. Many an eager glance did he direct towards the Blessed Isle. Fain would he reach it. One morning, on waking, it struck him that the opposite coast was unusually near: so low was the tide that perhaps he might ford it, or at all events swim. So down through the swamp and over the dry shingle he posted; and then across the sad and solid sand, off which the gentle wavelets had folded, right athwart the wet stones and crackling fuci, where tiny streams of laggard water and crustaceans tumbling

topsy-turvy in their crawling haste were trying to overtake the ocean: till abruptly met by the rising tide, he found to his dismay that, deep as was the ebb, the channel still was deeper. Disappointed here, he by and by bethought him of another plan. Westward of his dwelling the coast-line stretched away in successive cliffs and headlands, till it ended in a lofty promontory, which in its turn seemed to abut against the Happy Isle. Thither he made up his mind that he would take a pilgrimage. With slopes and swells, zigzags and windings, it proved far more distant than it looked; and when at last, footsore and staggering, he got to the summit, instead of a bridge to the Better Land, he found it a dizzy cliff, with the same relentless ocean weltering at its base. Baulked in this final effort, he went down and flung himself on the rocks and wept. It was during this paroxysm of vexation, that looking up he noticed a small boat, with whose appearance he was familiar. He was a little surprised to see it there, for he remembered that it used to ride exactly opposite his own habitation; although, belonging to no one in particular, and not having brought any of the commodities they cared for, he and the other inhabitants had never paid it much attention. Having now nothing else to do, he looked at it eagerly and somewhat wonderingly. It neared him. It came close up to the rocks where he was seated. It was a beautiful boat, with snowy sail and golden prow and a red pennon flying. There was one on board, and only one. His raiment was white and glistering, and his features were such as could only have come from the Happy Isle. "Son of man," he

said, "why weepest thou?" "Because I cannot reach yonder blessed region." "Couldst thou trust thyself to me?" The pilgrim looked, first at the little skiff and then at its benignant pilot, and said, "I can." With that timid Yes, he stepped on board, and like a sunbeam, so swift, it bore him away from that dismal coast; and ere he could believe it, he was a denizen of the Happy Isle, breathing its immortal air; at home amidst its loveliness, and numbered with its citizens.

The happy isle is peace with God; the blessed state which man when sinless occupied. The dreary land is the state of alienation from the living God, in which, with joyless acquiescence, so many are living. And the little skiff—the only means of passing over from the one region to the other—is the atonement, the intercession of Jesus Christ. It is not by the headland of reformation that you will be able to attain the peace which passeth understanding; nor will you be able to ford the channel even when the tide of worldliness and sin runs lowest. Your repentance, your self-amendment, will not suffice; but peace with God is a gift from God, and He who bought it with His blood, in the gospel brings it to your door. Be thankful. You cannot build your own bridge, nor swim the great gulf: be thankful for the transporting medium divinely provided and divinely sent. Be thankful for this ark of salvation and its friendly pilot. That pilot is the true Elder Brother, and to trust yourself to Him is to make the instant transition from the far country to the Father's arms. There, and in His royal resources, you will find amply supplied all which you this moment lack:

the robe of a spotless righteousness; the ring which tells of a restored inheritance; and shoes, the badge of freedom, "the preparation of the Gospel of peace," with joyful alacrity winging the feet, and enabling you to walk at liberty.

THE FESTIVAL.

"Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry."—LUKE XV. 23, 24.

No one acquainted with the subject will undervalue the light thrown on the Bible by recent research. But much as these latter days are indebted to the topographer, the linguist, and the antiquary, when we return to the times of our fathers, it is gratifying to observe how seldom competent intelligence and a reverential spirit have missed the sacred meaning. Were you taking, for example, any passage in the Gospels, it is possible that some modern critic may have settled a jot or tittle which hung in doubt a hundred years ago, and modern explorers have elucidated facts in natural science and allusions to Eastern manners which were once obscure; but with such allowance, if from our modern interpreters you go back to Erasmus with his plain straightforward practicalness, or Calvin with his penetrating decisive insight, or Grotius with his rich scholarship and capacious intellect, you will be surprised to find how little that is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in

righteousness," was hid from predecessors as able as ourselves, as studious, and perhaps on the whole as free from prejudice.

Half-way between the Reformation and the present time lived Matthew Henry. In one of the last summers of Queen Anne, and when Addison was writing *Spectators* or *Guardians,* Henry was expounding the parable of the Prodigal Son;[1] and we may quote, somewhat condensed, his remarks on this passage. Of course they are quaint and homely. The polished ease of Kensington had not penetrated to the meeting-house in Hackney, and we rather like the kindly humour which animates the trim precision of the Puritan, and gives it an effect like wit. Indeed, as in the kindred instances of Donne and Joseph Hall and Thomas Fuller, we own a relish for that sprightly wisdom which lightens as it indicates the labour of love; and for the devout sagacity of our expositor we can desire no more appropriate vehicle than his own sententious playfulness.

"He came home in rags, and his father not only clothed but adorned him. He said to the servants, who all attended their master, Bring forth the best robe. The worst old clothes in the house might have served, and had been good enough for him; but the father calls not for a coat, but for a robe, the garment of princes: the 'first robe'—so it may be read—the robe he wore before

[1] Henry's exposition of Luke was begun March 1713, and finished on the 10th of July. That day was the Friday on which Addison published the story of a French gentleman, which forms No. 104 of the *Guardian.* The reader need scarcely be reminded that the *Guardian* was a sort of parenthesis in the *Spectator,* which was resumed after the cessation of the former.

he ran his ramble.[1] Bring hither that robe and put it on him; he shall be ashamed to wear it, and think it ill becomes him, who comes home in such a dirty pickle; but 'put it on him.' And 'put a ring on his hand;' a signet-ring, with the arms of the family, in token of his being owned as a branch of the family. Rich people wore rings, and his father hereby signified that, though he had spent one portion, yet upon his repentance he intended him another. He came home barefoot, his feet perhaps sore with travel, and therefore 'put shoes on his feet,' to make him easy. He would have thought it sufficient, and been very thankful, if his father had but taken notice of him, and bade him go to the kitchen and get his dinner with the servants; but God doth for those who return to their duty, and cast themselves upon his mercy, abundantly above what they are able to ask or think . . . and the fatted calf can never be better bestowed."

[1] This is the rendering of the Vulgate, making στολὴν τὴν πρώτην = ἀρχαίαν, the "first" or former" robe, the robe he used to wear. But as Alford justly says, "This would not be consistent with the former part of the parable, in which he was not turned out with any disgrace, but left as a son and of his own accord." Here the remarks are excellent of Archbishop Trench, whose book, with Greswell's, is for English readers the great repertory of "things new and old" on this and all the parables. After referring to Zech. iii. 4, he proceeds: "These words ('Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee') brought to bear on the passage before us, make it, I think, more probable that, by this bringing out of the best robe, and putting it upon him, is especially signified that act of God, which, considered on its negative side, is a release from condemnation, a causing of the sinner's iniquity to pass from him,—on its positive side, is an imputation to him of the merits and righteousness of his Lord (Isaiah lxi. 10)."—Trench *On the Parables*, eighth edition, p. 411. "The στολὴ πρώτη denotes the righteousness of God, Rev. iii. 18; vii. 13; xix. 8. The δακτύλιον, the signet-ring, denotes the seal of the Spirit, the testimony that a man belongs to God; the ὑποδήματα (Eph. vi. 15) denotes the power of walking in the way of God. The entertainment made ready points to the δεῖπνον to which the βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ is often compared."—Olshausen (*Clark's Library*), vol. iii. p. 42.

The feast which now took place—to use the words of one whose genial wisdom has uttered many things in the spirit and power of Matthew Henry—denotes "the joy of a forgiving God over a forgiven man, and the joy of a forgiven man in a forgiving God."[1] The one is a gracious revelation, the other is a blessed experience, and each reacts upon the other. To a forth-going affectionate nature it is a joy to be trusted; to a benevolent nature it is a joy to diffuse happiness; to a holy nature it is a joy to create righteousness and arrest evil; and in the case of every soul that is saved such is the joy of God. And whilst over the son who was dead but who now lives again, He lavishes the riches of His grace, responsive to heaven's happiness there is often shed through the believing soul a joy unspeakable, a peace which passeth understanding.

There can be no greater blessedness than his who apprehends the love of God. Mr. Charles of Bala, the founder of adult schools in Wales, and the originator of the Bible Society, was only eighteen when he heard the sermon which first disclosed to him the way of life and imparted to his bright and beneficent career the initial impulse. "Ever since that happy day," he says, "I have lived in a new heaven and a new earth. The change which a blind man, who receives his sight, experiences, does not exceed the change which at that time I experienced in my mind. It was then that I was first convinced of the sin of unbelief, or of entertaining narrow, contracted, and hard thoughts of the Almighty. I had

[1] Arnot *On the Parables*, p. 440.

such a view of Christ as our High Priest, of his love, compassion, power, and all-sufficiency, as filled my soul with astonishment; with joy unspeakable and full of glory." No doubt there are natures not emotional, and there are others who live in a foggy atmosphere and seldom enjoy a feast of sunshine. Even those to whom, as converts suddenly awakened or prodigals remarkably restored, the transition is most striking, cannot count on a lifetime of rapture. From the very Mount of Transfiguration, although it was "good to be there," it was needful to descend; and although the younger son had never in his existence known an evening like this, the music and dancing could not last for ever. Within they were "merry," but already murmurs were heard outside; and even although there had been no disagreeable inmate to propitiate, the morrow would bring homely duties and grave realities, nor could every day conclude with a fatted calf.

There are few, even among Christians, to whom the whole of life is festival. Still it is a great advantage, if you have a marked and memorable time in your spiritual history: a day of decision, a day when first you owned the claims of Christ, or gave yourself to God: a book, a sermon, a communion, an interview when your heart burned: some happy hour, which has now become a holy memory. Fain would we hope that the perusal of these pages may be made to some reader such a landmark; or should they fall into the hands of any one who is trying to begin the Christian life, may the Holy Spirit speak through them the word in season!

One of the most earnest men whom we have ever known was the late Mr. James of Birmingham. With a frequent feeling that he had not long to live, his sermons were always practical and often solemnly urgent, and when thrown into the society of others he was usually trying to do good. He was greatly honoured. Commencing his ministry with forty communicants, and a congregation of two hundred hearers, he ended with nearly a thousand church-members, and an audience of twice that number. Of his *Anxious Inquirer* half-a-million of copies have been circulated, and the instances cannot be counted of those whom it has led to the Saviour. On the last Sabbath of his life he preached that gospel which it had been the delight of half-a-century to proclaim, and on the Friday following he wrote to Mr. Birrell, forwarding some recollections of Knill the missionary. "During the last week I had a considerable accession of disease, and am now quite laid aside, so that I look upon it as the beginning of the end. I think it probable that with these few notes on dear Knill's life and labours, I shall lay down my pen, which has written much; would God it had written better! But while I say this, I am not without hope—yea, I may add conviction—that it has written usefully. In some humble degree, I have aimed at *usefulness* both in my preaching and writing, and God has, to an amount which utterly astonishes and almost overwhelms me, given me what I sought. It seems a daring and almost presumptuous expression, but with a proper qualification it is a true one—that usefulness is within the reach of us

all. *The man who intensely desires to be useful, and takes the proper means, will be useful.* God will not withhold His grace from such desires and such labours. O my brother, how delightful is it, notwithstanding the humbling and sorrowful consciousness of defects and sins, to look back upon a life spent for Christ. I thank a sovereign God, I am not without some degree of this." Next morning he was absent from the body, and death had set his seal on the testimony that the man is sure to be useful who has the intense desire, and who takes the proper means.

Usefulness is your desire. God has been very kind to you. You have not only received a free forgiveness, but the spirit of adoption. With the ring on your finger reminding you of your Father's love, you would like to be engaged in your Father's business; and with the shoes on your feet, protecting from injury and making rough places smooth, you can go wherever God gives an errand.

What that errand may be, if you wait on the Lord His word and providence will in due time indicate. For men of zeal and energy there is continual need in the Christian ministry; and with openings unprecedented since the apostolic age, for a cheerful warm-hearted worker there is no field like foreign missions. Even within the limits of many a secular vocation there is ample scope for Christian philanthropy. If a merchant, you may befriend a lad of good promise, and find for him a safe and appropriate opening. If a physician, you may not only save precious lives and mitigate a vast amount of human misery, but treading in the footsteps of the Great Physician, by the

word in season you may heal diseases sorer and more disastrous than any which afflict the body. Law itself may do homage to the gospel, and taking up the cause of the oppressed, or mediating betwixt litigious neighbours, you will find, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor;" "Blessed are the peacemakers." If honestly earned, even gold may be so consecrated as never to become filthy lucre; and as it simmers on the cottage hob or sings in the kettle of the lonely sempstress—as it strikes the thankful key in the widow's heart, or comes out in the festive chorus of the Ragged School, "Oh, that will be joyful, joyful, joyful!" you will be regaled with better music than if you had bought a season ticket at the opera.

Amongst the trees of the wood there is a vast variety: the sturdy oak, the flexile willow; the solid maple, the graceful ash; the terraced cedar with cones uprising through each grassy-looking lawn of tender leafery, the larch, in lieu of bells hanging its scarlet blossoms from every pointed arch of its green pagoda; the stiff stout holly disdainful of the breeze, the fidgety aspen all in a flutter at the faintest sigh; the spacious chestnut enclasping the glebe in its bountiful branches, the strict solemn cypress with every appressed twiglet pointing straight up to heaven. As with the form, so with the bark or the timber: the ebony sinking like stone, the cork on the crest of the billow; the elder so soft and spongy, the box in its firm structure retentive of the finest engraving; the homely deal, the thyine veneer emulating the spots of the panther or the plumes of the peacock:—beautiful some, but useful all, and not to be interchanged with advantage.

An ashen bow would be no better than a yew-tree lance; you do not choose the fir for the prince's table; and even England's oak would make a sorry mast for "some great ammiral."

Through all God's kingdoms we trace the like variety, and still we find it when we rise to the minds of men. There is endless diversity in their nature, and for every form and style abundant use; and it is best when they are not transposed. Melanchthon would have made a poor substitute for Luther; but the absence of Melanchthon would have left it a poorer Reformation. Great as was the invention of the Sunday school, it was not revealed to Bishop Butler, but was reserved for Robert Raikes; and yet if the former had not written the *Analogy*, it may be doubted if the latter could have supplied the desideratum. And although Jeremy Taylor and John Bunyan had each a fine fancy, the world is now agreed that if they had changed places, they could have made it no better; we are quite content with the *Pilgrim* of the one, and the *Golden Grove* of the other.

Sanguine and non-sympathetic natures insist that every one, if he likes, may do the things which they not only do, but do so easily. To a man like Lord Thurlow, coarse and contemptuous of mankind, it must have been a simple amazement when his kinsman Cowper resigned the clerkship of the Lords, because he had not courage to read aloud minutes and petitions; but, although the brazen Chancellor was a stranger to all trepidation, and it would have cost him no effort to read his own rhymes to the peers of Parnassus, it may be questioned if, even to secure

the Great Seal, he could have written the "Task" or "John Gilpin." And, although nothing can be more true than that talents increase by trading, it is also true that their right investment—the sort of trade best suited to each merchantman—is indicated by the natural turn or faculty; and we shall serve God and our generation best by turning to account the gift which He Himself has given. You who are fond of children, as most frank true natures are, give yourself to teaching; and you who have a fervid forceful spirit, and find that spirit stirred by the state of our godless multitude, go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in. And you who cannot arrest or keep the children's ear, and to whom aught like preaching would be useless martyrdom, seek out some other ministry: consecrate the business talent, and in the savings bank or provident fund, in the committee or council of the church, "rule with diligence." Or go forth and visit. The tired watcher in the sick-room release for a few hours of needful slumber. Take to the bed-rid child some plaything, to the destitute family some comfort. And whether you offer the brief prayer, or read the words of Jesus to the invalid, "show mercy with cheerfulness:" try to do it as if you came and went in Christ's own company, and then, long after you have left, the consolation will remain.

It is thus that by each following out his own line of things the world's best work has been done; and in the free development and loving consecration of gifts the Church has exhibited a diversity both useful and beautiful. It was thus that, wherever John Macdonald went

in perambulating the Highlands, a wave of spiritual influence went with him; and it was thus that, like a Baptist and a beloved disciple combined, George Whitefield startled and melted all England. It is thus that, in our own day, one Christian lady has sought out the prisoner, and another has softened and civilized the neglected navvy, and a third has mended "ragged homes," and a fourth has invented the Bible and Domestic Mission, and a fifth has rallied to the task of nursing—so arduous, yet so angel-like—the refined and well-trained amongst her countrywomen. And it is thus that in an employment, however commonplace, and in a corner, however inconspicuous, if you take up the task which your hand finds to do, and throw into it the might which God gives, the result will be genuine, solid, enduring. Let each do his own work in his own way, and, as all good work is God's, you will soon see it a more beautiful church and a better world.

To a few God gives a high calling. Like Gustavus Adolphus, when, at the close of three exhausting campaigns, he listened to the cry of the German Protestants, and began the contest which to him ended at Lützen, to the Fatherland only ended as yesterday: "For me henceforward remains no rest, save the eternal:" they are summoned to a service, peculiar, protracted, exhausting—a service which conscience dare not decline, or from which, when fairly commenced, they can never break away. But more usually, instead of a single absorbing pursuit, the Christian's calling includes a thousand details. We remember Dr. N. Murray, the famous "Kirwan" of America,

mentioning that in his youth he met an old disciple, ninety-one years of age, and in taking leave the venerable pilgrim left with his young friend a charge which he had never forgotten: "Do all the good you can—to all the people you can—in all the ways you can—and as long as you can." If that rule were carried out by each Christian, it would soon change the face of society. If you, who are the Christian member of the family, were setting a watch over your lips, and were in all things wise, gentle, obliging, self-denying, high-toned, few in the household could withstand the quiet persistent sermon; and if the Christian households of the land were as peaceful as they are pure —if the several inmates were fair-minded, kind-hearted, mutually helpful—if in the school, the market, the social gathering, the various members lived up to the level of their morning and evening worship—there would soon be poor chance for the infidel: apologetics might become an obsolete science: with such a church in every house, the synagogue of Satan would disappear from the land.

—The feast is ended. The fatted calf is consumed; the music and dancing have ceased; and although there abides a deep calm thankfulness, the mirth and excitement are over. There is no need, however, to tread the deserted hall, and grow sentimental because the "lights are fled," and "the garlands dead." You are at home; you are in the Father's house; and if you are a good son, now that it is morning you will be ready to set about the Father's business. Without waiting for the word express, you will proceed as if it were actually spoken, "Son, go work this day in my vineyard." It is from not remember-

ing this that many a younger son is so wretched. You are idle ; you are useless ; with plenty of lip-homage, you have little filial affection ; you have not that love to your Father which rouses to activity and self-denial ; and, as if it were a mystery or a hardship, you complain that you no longer enjoy the happiness of your first home-coming. After the rich spiritual food you once enjoyed, the fare seems scanty and common. You come to the house of God, but find no feast of fat things, and it even seems as if on your Father's face there were a displeased look—a very decided frown.

Would you know the reason ? There is a divine delicacy in the ways of God. He does not clog His gospel with conditions, nor is the joy of forgiveness dashed by formal stipulations as to future conduct. He would have you be, not a hired servant, but a son—a son whose interest and honour are bound up with His own ; and if you cannot hear the voice of the neglected vineyard crying to every idler, " Come, work ! " He will not vex you by repeating too often, " Son, go ! " Nevertheless, knowing as you do the will of your Father, and merely saying, " I go, sir," without ever stirring a step, can you wonder that He is grieved at His heart ? can you wonder that your consolations are small ? can you wonder if you feel a dulness and depression which you once thought it impossible that you could ever experience at home ?

AN ANGRY BROTHER.

"Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in."—LUKE xv. 25-28.

MIRTH within, murmurs without; joy in heaven over sinners repenting, on earth jealousy—even amongst respectable professors of religion decided disapproval: Such are the contrasts here presented.

They had begun to be merry. The fatted calf had disappeared, but the table was still groaning with good things, and still from storehouse and vineyard the eager attendants kept piling the board; whilst every time that it rested on the worn face at his side, and through tears and smiles predicted a happy future, the father's eye glistened, and as the first embrace was repeated again and again, friends and neighbours would look to one another and say, "Is he not happy?"

But in the midst of it all—so loud that, though amidst the clash of the cymbals and the strain of the harp-strings, bounding feet and busy talk were scarcely audible, the discord at once pierced through the melody—in came the noise of altercation from without. When the prodigal

arrived, the elder brother had been "in the field"—at another farm, or on a distant part of the estate; and it is not a good sign of him that no one volunteered to go after him and carry the tidings. We suspect his sullen humour must have been too well known; for even when he was seen approaching, no one ran forward in the hope of giving him an agreeable surprise. Accordingly, it was not till he came near enough to notice the bustle and hear the music and dancing that he demanded, "What does all this mean?" "Thy brother is come," was the hearty straightforward answer; "and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound." To his cold and loveless nature, with its mean and mercenary spirit, the announcement was gall and wormwood. What did he care for his brother? a thorough scapegrace, whose absence was good company! after all his bad behaviour, how wrong to give him this reception! And then, as he thought of his own sober life and steady conduct, his sense of justice was aggrieved, and he could not curb his indignation. Has it been for this that the fatted calf was kept? and is this the recompense of long years of service? It was positively unfair: he did well to be angry. No indeed, he did not want to go in: he would rather go away. And there he stood, storming and scolding, till the angry words disturbed the guests and brought out his father.

Who is this elder son? Doubtless, it was intended that the murmurers then present should recognise in him their own portrait; just as they should see in this picture of paternal magnanimity the principle on which, in receiv-

ing publicans and sinners, Christ and His Father proceeded. "Conceding what you claim—granting that you Scribes and Pharisees are 'just persons who need no repentance'—should you not be glad to see sinners repenting, and wanderers restored to the paths of righteousness?" But, with its divine and far-reaching comprehensiveness, the parable suits every case of that sour self-complacency, which, ignorant of God's law, thinks it has established a claim on God's justice, and which, unable to sympathize with divine generosity, resents as a wrong to itself the kindness extended to others. It suits the Hebrew Church in the apostolic age, looking askance at Gentile Christendom, and grudging that the fatted calf, the portion of Israel, God's first-born, should be given to the heathen prodigal. It suits the dry and pedantic professor in a time of religious awakening, who does not like the excitement and the interruption of the ordinary tranquil routine, and who likes least of all the ragged reprobate, the outcast newly reclaimed, his younger brother. It suits the Pharisee, who till near the close keeps lurking in almost every heart. "Who is this elder son?" The question was once asked in an assembly of ministers at Elberfelt: Daniel Krummacher made answer, "I know him very well: I met him yesterday." "Who is he?" they asked eagerly, and he replied solemnly, "Myself." He then explained that on the previous day, hearing that a very ill-conditioned person had received a very gracious visitation of God's goodness, he had felt not a little envy and irritation.[1]

[1] Stier's *Words of the Lord Jesus* (Clark's Lib.) vol. iv. p. 142.

"God's thoughts are not as ours—we gird our breast
With the cold iron of complacent pride;
Our charities and kindness are comprest
With earth's hard bands, that check our love's soft tide;
And we to sinners say, with scornful brow,
'Stand off, for I am holier than thou!'

"Oh! 'tis not thus with God: His arms of love
Yearn for the thankless prodigal's embrace;
He sees him yet afar, He longs to prove
His love and pity and forgiving grace:
The Holy Dove spreads soft His peaceful wings,
And joy in heaven tunes high the seraph's strings."[1]

Latent in the parable, this brings to light the true Elder Brother. Shut up and frigid, with no candle of the Lord shining in his conscience, no coal from the altar glowing in his heart, the Pharisee has neither the sense of sin which sympathizes with the penitent, nor the loving-kindness which enters into the joy of a sin-forgiving God. "Every one that loveth is born of God. He that loveth not knoweth not God: for God is love." Even although it had been by nothing else, by His infinite faculty of love the Lord Jesus proved Himself the divinest of all men, whilst at the same time He became to us the most brotherly. With no connivance at evil, with no compromise of the law's requirement, His was that vast compassion which overcomes our evil with its good—that holy pity which softens into penitence and helps on to new obedience the heavy-laden transgressor. Here "in the midst"—here in the gospel of His grace, and here in His unchanging omnipresence—O sinner, behold your Saviour. It is He who from the Father's

[1] *Poems*, by the late Mrs. T. D. Crewdson.

bosom has come to the far country seeking the wanderer. It is He who assures you that, all provocations notwithstanding, the heart of God is still fatherly. It is He who holds out His hand and says to you, wearied of husks and weak with hunger, "Come, for all things are ready." It is He who, when you faintly rejoin, "I fain would arise and go, but I know not the way," makes answer, "I am the way," and bids you "come boldly." And when you droop the head and feel that you cannot so much as lift up your eyes to heaven, it is He who declares that He is not ashamed to call you brother, and who, Himself giving the word, bids you say in His name, "Our Father."

In the elder son of the parable the frightful feature is the total lack of affection. Unforgiving towards his brother, petulant to his father, it turns out that his vaunted obedience has all along been mercenary, and with his sulky looks and saucy words he stands before us utterly unamiable—the impersonation of that darkest, dreariest thing in all the universe—a loveless self-centred being.

It is a disposition which needs to be guarded against: for in our fallen nature there are terrible tendencies towards it. With some it takes the form of a cold calculating selfishness; and just as people who do not want the swallows to build in their windows take the brush and coat the corners with oil; so the thorough worldling is varnished all over. Friends may be useful, but attachments and sympathies are inconvenient, and therefore he is careful not to permit them. Even his parents, if they

grow old and it is suggested that he might do something towards promoting their comfort—he is sorry that the money which might have been otherwise available for them "is corban"—dedicated to another use, or so locked up that he cannot get at it. Every appeal to generosity, to gratitude, to pity, is like the poor martin's best-tempered mortar applied to the unctuous marble: met by refusals polite and plausible, from the surface of a heart fat as grease and hard as stone it falls off ineffectual; and thus, shutting up his compassions, if there ever was in him aught like the love of God, it dies away, and his gloomy soul goes out in the blackness of darkness. Whilst with others the same sombre spirit assumes a form more malignant and virulent. With nothing which they can love—for even their self is to itself unlovable—they lead the demon's life, and seek a bitter satisfaction in making others wretched. "Full of envy, murder, debate, backbiters, haters of God, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful," in the acetous fermentation of their own perversity the bounties of providence, the assiduities of kinsfolk and dependants, only sour the temper which they intended to sweeten; and disdainful of love, yet indignant at its absence, and for the sake of gratifying a fierce vindictiveness, courting insult, almost glad to be misunderstood or disobeyed, they pass through life fretting and fuming, grumbling and growling, and in their reign of terror give a frightful facsimile of Apollyon's dark dominion.

To be brought into intimate, perhaps life-long relations, with such heartless or malevolent natures, is one

of the heaviest crosses which any one can carry. Even simple wrong-headedness is a considerable trial; and there are in the world a good many "utterly unmanageable persons. You cannot say they are madmen. You cannot say they are idiots. But rationality flickers about them in so strange a way that they are often more difficult to deal with than the utterly irrational."[1] Yet, perplexing or provoking as such impracticable people may be, and humiliating as are the positions into which their impulsiveness brings us, their folly is often compensated by noble attributes, and the ministering spirit may find the difficult task of guiding and guarding them a labour of love. But alas for the helpmate of a savage! alas for the child or the servant of a churl! alas for the human heart on which a swart Vulcan forges his thunderbolts! alas for the head at which an explosive Jupiter hurls them! Although even here, in the perfect work of patience and in the maturing of meek and long-suffering graces, there is a certain compensation, and the long bondage is usually cheered by fits of rough kindness or gleams of better feeling. But to be "mated to a clown;" to "radiate affection into a clod:" to waste not merely the wealth of a playful fancy but the riches of a fond and self-devoting spirit on dull irresponsive earthliness, with no compensation in the present, with no hope in the future, this is the sorrow of sorrows. The father in the parable had a son seemingly void of affection, and we have known sons with a father so dreary that they found it difficult to fulfil the fifth command. And who is there over whose spirit there

[1] *Friends in Council*, second series, vol. ii. p. 18.

has not flitted a feeling like what Richter has described as his own, riding part of the road with a rustic bridegroom taking home his young bride?—"Oh, be not so joyful, poor sacrifice! Thy husband will soon demand of thee neither tenderness nor a light heart, but only rough working fingers, feet never weary, labouring arms, and a silent paralytic tongue." When it comes to that, for heart, for soul, for thoughts which might be accepted if not exchanged, there is no longer any use; and if they know not to go up to God, the best affections of our nature must just run to waste till the freshness of feeling has exhaled, or till the weariful existence has burned itself away.

All true love is one. The first commandment is very great, but the second is not little. They are upper and nether pools, and the same fountain fills them. He who is richest in the love of God has the greatest advantage for loving his neighbour—for loving his family, his household, his country, and the world. And that is the best and happiest state of things—the primal and truly natural—where, springing from under the throne of God, with a bright and heaven-reflecting piety love fills the upper pool; then through the open flower-fringed channel of filial affection and the domestic charities flows softly till it again expands in neighbourly kindness and unreserved philanthropy. The channel may be choked. The devotee may close it up in the hope of raising the level in the first and great reservoir; but by arresting the current he causes an overflow, and converts into swamp the surrounding garden. In the same way, the materialist or

worldling, content with the lower pool, may fill up the conduit and declare that he is no longer dependent on the upper magazine; but from the isolated cistern quickly evaporates the scanty supply, and thick with slime, weltering with worms, the stagnant residue mocks the thirsty owner, or as over the bubbling malaria he persists to linger, it fills his frame with the mortal fever. Cut off from living water, receiving from on high no consecrating element, human affection is too sure to end in the disgust of a disappointed idolatry or the mad despair of a total bereavement: whilst the mystic theopathy which, in order to give the whole heart to God, gives none to its fellows, will soon have no heart at all.

Love is of God, and all true love is one. The piety which is not humane will soon grow superstitious and gloomy; in cases like Dominic and Philip the Second we see that it may soon grow bloodthirsty and cruel: nor, on the other hand, will brotherly love long continue if the love of God is not shed abroad abundantly. And it is as the cradle of either affection—it is in order that life may begin in the sweet union of affection and worship, that God created and in a fallen world perpetuates the home.

To use the words of a thoughtful writer: "God made the first man after a Divine original, and after a Divine original, too, He made the first home. . . . God has not borrowed these images—'father,' 'children,' 'home.' It is heaven that lends to earth, not earth to heaven. The things that are upon earth, the things which have root in humanity as God made it, and which are not the

devil's work, are first *there*. Heaven but reclaims its own when it takes these images, and applies them again to heavenly use."[1] And although the downward tendencies of human nature often make the task tremendous—although the best-intentioned members of the home are after all only sinful beings surrounded by others of like passions and like infirmities—the institution is so holy, and the calling of each member so high, that no effort should be spared, no prayer cease, till it become what God designed and will assuredly help us to make it, a nursery for heaven, by becoming ever nearer and nearer to a heaven on earth.

Dr. Livingstone mentions a place where the people have never seen flowers.[2] How you pity their children! But on man made after His own image God has bestowed a power corresponding to His own creative faculty; and although—like ants which throw off their wings in becoming workers—most grown people have discarded their imagination before entering on actual life, the little ones still have it; and if there are no flowers, they will quickly make them. If the surrounding atmosphere be warm and genial, wakeful life will be a ceaseless joy: invention will never be exhausted, and the materials of pastime will never be far to seek: a few corks will improvise a navy, and sticks and stones a palace. Only you must keep up the temperature. The fairy-world of the little "makers"—as we used to call the poets—collapses in chill weather, and if, in the shape of a sullen nurse or non-sympathetic

[1] *The Home Life: in the Light of its Divine Idea.* By J. Baldwin Brown, p. 8.

[2] *Missionary Travels*, p. 101.

mother, a glacier invades the play-room, the frost-bitten Eden is soon replaced by bleak reality, and the expatriated exiles, waking up in an old-people's world, grow joyless and cross, and begin to quarrel with one another.

Very precious is that power which the little children have, and which, when we become as little children, we sometimes get again. It is not entirely creative. There is in it something of the open vision. The cradle of the race was in the midst of beauty, God smiling over it, nature smiling round it; and of a vague blessedness and beauty enough still lingers to make the infant smile back again. When Blake the artist was ten years old he saw at Peckham Rye "a tree full of angels." His father beat and scolded, but young William would not shut his eyes, and all through life kept sight of the angels. And just as "their angels do always behold the face of the Father," so God comes very near them. No check upon their sports, at mention of His name there may be a momentary sedateness, a moment of awed wonder: but still very near, and still notwithstanding all their naughtiness very kind, their faith gives freedom, and the truest reverence is their love. We knew a little girl not three years old. She put into her prayers real desires. One night before lying down, after praying for papa, mamma, and her nurse by name, she prayed with the same solemnity for the new kitten. "O God, open little pussy's eyes, and make its tail grow." She was not told that this was wrong, or bidden pray for the Jews and the heathen instead; and perhaps it was better to let the prayer grow with her growth, for when she was older and became

interested in them, of her own accord she prayed for both Jews and Gentiles; and if she had been told that it was not proper to pray about such little things as kittens, she might next have doubted whether it was right for little things to pray.

Let the children's home be bright and beautiful and very gladsome. It was brightly that the existence of the race began; and with all that you can do to embellish and enliven the nursery, it will not be so charming as the first place which our Heavenly Father prepared for His children: it will not come up to the garden God planted on the banks of Hiddekel. But when bleak days arrive, it is good to have sweet and sunny memories; for fancy gives them wings and sends them on before, and in the guise of hope they invite us into the future. What we call idealism is really Edenism: it is partly the reminiscence of one paradise, partly the effort after another. And in that home the very brightest, gladdest, holiest thing, let it be the name of Jesus, the presence of God. In psalms and hymns sweetly sung, in the going up to the house of God, in Sabbaths crowned with special joys, in Bible stories and good books, let there be not only the didactic but the endearing; and even if some loveless nature should be the sad exception, and pass through it all as sullen as that elder brother, it may well be hoped that few will ever wander; and if there should be some hapless prodigal,—carrying such recollections with him, who can doubt that in the far country they will at last awaken an irresistible longing, and end in exclaiming, "I will arise and go to my Father?"

Be this your aim. Father, mother, brothers, sisters, as the years advance, join your efiorts to upbuild and beautify the home. Let it be the abode of peace, and love, and mutual helpfulness, and let those nights be the happiest when no one needs to leave it.

"How calm, how blest this tranquil hour
Of household evening joy!
The world shut out, with all its power
To trouble or annoy.

The world shut out, and love shut in,
With youth and gentle mirth,
Which ever make their pleasant din
Best by the household hearth.

The duties of the day are done,
Its toil and burden o'er,
To claim, until the rising sun,
Our anxious hearts no more.

Then let us rest amid the gifts
God's tenderness hath given,
And bless each blessing as it lifts
Our grateful hearts to heaven."[1]

A scene like that, a shadow of still better things, to the heart which has ever known it will be a charm for ever:—a magnet, the force of which will be felt across the hemisphere—a saving memory which in the darkest hour will sustain the wanderer's faith in goodness and in God.

[1] Monsell.

A RIGHTEOUS FATHER.

"Therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."—LUKE XV. 28-32.

SKETCHED by the hand of a Divine Artist, we have here a picture of fatherhood inimitable and unapproachable, and which inevitably sends up our thoughts to the Divine Original from which it is outlined. Fain would we dwell on it; but before passing away we merely notice—

1. *The father's love.*—Of a kindred love the apostle declares that its breadth, and length, and depth, and height pass knowledge; and a great deep must have been that affection which the sharp wind of ingratitude failed to freeze, which a long course of waywardness could not exhaust, and of which, on the prodigal's return, the fountains broke up, and, overflowing in a grand final burst of compassion, covered mountains of provocation, leaving all things new at their reflux in the mind of the pardoned penitent.

2. *His wisdom.*—Our fondness sometimes grows foolish.

and in concessions and refusals alike our weakness is shown. When the younger son demanded his portion of goods, though deeply wounded the father did not withstand. His home should not be a prison, and where the highest considerations and holiest influences had lost their power, he would not resort to coercion. He foresaw the result, but as this was a folly which experience alone could cure, he allowed the truant to depart and find out for himself how hard is the way of transgressors. Nor did he shorten the trial. If, as is not unlikely, he knew of the famine in the far country, he took no steps to interpose betwixt the misguided youth and a severe but salutary discipline; till, thoroughly filled with the fruits of his own devices, he felt and owned the bitter evil of his sin.

3. *His dignity.*—In all the father's sayings, as well as in his silence, come out the tokens of a lofty mind. When the younger son demands his portion, the deed which wisdom dictates is performed with regal grandeur; no remonstrance, no unavailing entreaties, no attempt at compromise, nothing kept back in the way of deduction; and when he returns, a ragged and penniless outcast, there is no recalling of the past, no stipulation as to the future, but a forgiveness frank and free, a kingly munificence dissolving in fatherly tenderness, and from an ingenuous spirit the surest to draw back filial devotion. With like elevation he meets a rude remonstrance. In the coarseness of rage the elder son did not even address him as "father," and only spoke of his brother as "this thy son;" but with high-born grace and the kindly tact of a goodness safe in its own supremacy, the father vindi-

cates himself, and puts to shame the angry railer. "Son" —for it is thus he retorts the insult which would not call him "father"—"Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that *we* [you and I and all of us] should make merry and be glad; [and if any should be merrier than another it is thou] for this *thy brother* was dead, and is alive again; and he was lost, and is found."

4. *His large-heartedness.*—Not only was he a generous householder, where the hired servants had bread enough and to spare; but he could not be happy himself without giving others a share. "To the servants he had never told his grief; but now the prodigal is come back, and his heart is bursting with joy, he tells them of it. He cannot conceal it, he does not seek to conceal it. He says, Let us eat and be merry—I am so happy myself, I wish all others to be happy. Banish all care; drop your toils; let the shepherd come from the hill, the ploughman from the furrow, the herd from the pastures, the meanest servant come; and all wearing smiles, and joining in the song, hold holiday with my heart."[1]

5. *His equity.*—His elder son thought him unfair. "Here have I been toiling on these weary years, improving the estate and never causing thee a moment's anxiety: yet thou hast never given me so much as a kid with which to entertain my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, who hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf." Angry and outspoken, this splenetic effusion betrayed a wretched

[1] Dr. Guthrie.

spirit. Passing for a son, he had all along been actuated by feelings which many a hireling would blush to avow; and, "never receiving wages, he had certainly never yet enjoyed the only true reward in his heart."[1] After a speech so petulant and saucy, the father might have turned away in displeasure and left him to his wrathful musings; but in order to bring him to his right mind, in the tone most fitted to conquer and conciliate, he sets before the murmurer considerations which had escaped his evil eye. The question of work and wages was settled by that one word "Son," and is disposed of more completely still in the noble utterance, "All that I have is thine." Betwixt a father and a son there can be no separate interests. If desirous to entertain thy friends, there was not on all the estate kid or fatted calf which thou couldst not any day command. But there are higher equities than work and wages. Even as a labourer thou hast received thine hire; but when all accounts are settled we still owe love to one another: our debt to the highest charities it needs a lifetime to discharge. It is "meet" that we should forgive faults and injuries. It is meet that we should compassionate the wretched and receive the penitent. It is meet that we should fulfil the claims of affection, be it parental or fraternal; and when our hearts are filled with gladness it is meet that we should express our joy, and let our friends and neighbours share it. It is meet that you and I should on a day like this make merry.

Let us hope that the entreaty was not in vain, and that,

[1] Van Oosterzee *On Luke*, vol. ii. p. 68.

bringing to his right mind the elder son, this happy night closed over a completed family. For, as it now turns out, both sons had been lost. The one had run away, but the other was a truant in spirit though he tarried at home. And to give heart and soul to a loveless nature—to give loyalty and devotion to the calculating mercenary—to create the filial spirit where there was nothing but the name before, needs grace as mighty as that which heals backslidings and recals the wanderer, and sets among the princes the once abject and degraded prodigal.

A piece of gold may be melted, and it may be moulded into almost any shape. It may be rolled out in bars, drawn into wire, minted into money. It may be twisted into the finest filigree, or beaten into leaflets, compared with which the flimsiest fabric of the loom or paper-frame seems coarse. But if you are so fortunate as to find a goodly pearl, you will not apply pincers or hammer, nor will you put it in the crucible. You will do wisely to preserve its original form unaltered, its native lustre unimpaired.

Some texts are golden. In the arguments of the Epistles and in the devotional outpourings of the Psalms, as well as in the historical incidents of either Testament, those who search the Scriptures will find great truths imbedded; and, sectile, ductile, malleable, we feel that it is no misuse if they are projected into propositions, divided into heads and particulars, drawn out into mani-

fold applications, or even attenuated into such thin foil as is used in the manufacture of modern theological essays. A good deal may be done with a few grains of gold; and in this field, faithful and persevering search is sure to be rewarded with hoards or solid ingots.

There are other passages, however, which we dare not thus handle. We may repeat them, and revolve them, and, like gems, may hold them up in different lights, or try them in various settings; but such a saying as "God is love," and such an incident as our Lord's lamentation over Jerusalem, we feel as if no scholastic tool should ever touch them. What better can the preacher do than exhibit them in their divine and unapproachable glory to the reverential contemplation of his hearers, peradventure trying a few of those expedients which are open to us in the way of foil and cross-light and contrast?

Such a feeling has kept us hovering timidly over this "pearl of parables."[1] Unable to pass away from it, we have failed to expound it. We have thrown out a few thoughts which its contemplation suggested, and noted a few analogous incidents gleaned from the records of a

[1] An expression of Stier, quoted by Van Oosterzee, Alford, and nearly all subsequent annotators. "For the beautiful, the pathetic, the instructive," says Dr. Adam Clarke, "the history of Joseph in the Old Testament, and the parable of the prodigal son in the New, have no parallels either in sacred or profane history." Even the cold rationalistic temperament of Grotius is thawed into a fervid admiration. "Inter omnes Christi parabolas hæc sane eximia, plena affecturum, et pulcherrimis picta coloribus." As has been well said by a living compatriot of the great Hollander, "Nowhere is that divine compassion which anticipates and outruns the sinner set forth in a way more tender and human—I might say, in a way more sincere and affectionate—than in this beautiful parable, which gives us deep insight into both the loving heart of the Divine Father and the sinful heart of man (Gods liefderijk vaderhart en het zondaarshart van den mensch)." Cohen-Stuart: *De Verloren Zoon*, Utrecht, p. 7.

kindred experience. But the fair flower in your garden you do not cut down and dissect; you rather return and dwell on its loveliness day after day. And when people speak of throwing light on such a passage, it almost seems a preposterous inversion. Itself a light in a dark place, as there it stands and from the lattice of the Father's house shines toward our far country, its friendly radiance has cheered and guided to the threshold many a benighted wanderer. It needs no exposition. It only needs the softened heart, the wistful gaze, the single eye. These may He graciously bestow who is the Spirit of Truth, and Tenderness!

No doubt, from time to time as we proceeded, parallel instances have recurred to the mind of many a reader. Besides names already quoted, some would think of John Newton and General Burn. To memories familiar with early Christian records would recur the story of the youth become a renegade and robber, so remarkably reclaimed by the apostle John; and what are Augustine's *Confessions* but a long and yet intense expansion of the Prodigal's prayer? In the Pitcairn Islanders we have the departure and return of a prodigal ship's company; and the annals of reformations and religious revivals remind us of the Father's house forsaken and sought again by prodigal nations. A few individual examples may form an appropriate conclusion. They may comfort those who are mourning over a prodigal not yet returned. They illustrate the providence of God and the way of His Spirit. They are an encouragement to prayer, and on the side of parents and others they should be an incentive to per-

sonal exemplariness as long as the family circle continues unbroken.

During the late American war, at one of the Saturday evening meetings in Camp Distribution said a soldier to his comrades, "My friends, I left home an infidel, but I left a praying wife. A week ago I received a letter from her, in which she expressed anxiety for the welfare of my soul, and desired to know if I still held to my old views. I wrote an answer to the letter, and in bitter words defended my old position. As I was about to seal the letter, it seemed to me I could not send it. I wrote another, softened down considerably from the first, but when that was done I could not send it. I commenced another, but such was the power of the Spirit upon my heart, that I fell upon my knees and begged for forgiveness before God. I could not finish the letter until I could say to my dear wife that Christ had forgiven my sins. I have been permitted to write to her that I am to-night rejoicing in her Saviour. I feel that I am now prepared for the battle-field, and if ever I am permitted to return home, I trust I shall go back prepared for that, a better man than when I came into the army."[1] We hope the praying wife and the converted husband were soon allowed to meet; but sometimes these prayers are not answered till the supplicant has reached the land of praise. When Hedley Vicars was in Canada, there was a young man in his Bible-class who sometimes felt a good deal touched by the earnest words of that fine Christian hero; but although almost persuaded, like most of his comrades

[1] *Fourth Annual Report of the United States Christian Commission*, p. 77.

he continued frolicsome, light-hearted, and godless. They were ordered to the Crimea, and one dark night in the trenches the Russians made a sortie, and in repelling it Vicars fell with a rifle-ball through his heart. A bullet pierced through the heart of the captain, and at the same instant a sword went through the soul of the young soldier. The captain, he felt, has gone to heaven; but where shall I go if there be a like messenger for me? The words which his fallen chief had spoken whilst yet with them were now called to remembrance, and ended in the entire revolution of his feelings and character.—It was from the lips of the Crimean soldier himself that we heard the tale, and he had then become a diligent and faithful Christian minister.

The far country is wide, and to those who try to follow the prodigal its recesses are intricate, its fastnesses very inaccessible. But although the remonstrances of a father, the tears of a sister, the silent beseechings of a broken-hearted wife, may never overtake the wanderer; although, shut up in the iron fortress of his own passion or self-pleasing, he may defy them all, and throw them off as the adamant sheds the hail-shower, there is One who compasses the path of the prodigal, and from whose presence it is idle to flee. We told how a prodigal's progress was arrested in the case of George Cowie of Huntly. On the authority of his biographer, we venture to relate an incident still more striking in the career of the illustrious American missionary, Adoniram Judson. He was a minister's son, and, very able and very ambitious, he was early sent to college. In the class above was a young man of

the name of E——, brilliant, witty, and popular, but a determined deist. Between him and the minister's son there sprang up a close intimacy, which ended in the latter gradually renouncing all his early beliefs, and becoming as great a sceptic as his friend. He was only twenty years of age, and you may be sure it was a terrible distress and consternation which filled the home circle, when, during the recess, he announced that he was no longer a believer in Christianity. More than a match for his father's arguments, he steeled himself against all softer influences, and with his mind made up to enjoy life and see the world, he first joined a company of players at New York, and then set out on a solitary tour. One night he stopped at a country inn. Lighting him to his room, the landlord mentioned that he had been obliged to place him next door to a young man who was exceedingly ill, in all probability dying, but he hoped that it would occasion him no uneasiness. Judson assured him that, beyond pity for the poor sick man, he should have no feeling whatever. Still the night proved a restless one. Sounds came from the sick-chamber—sometimes the movements of the watchers, sometimes the groans of the sufferer—and the young traveller could not sleep. So close at hand, with but a thin partition between us, he thought, there is an immortal spirit about to pass into eternity, and is he prepared? And then he thought, "For shame of my shallow philosophy! What would E——, so intellectual and clear-headed, think of this boyish weakness?" And then he tried to sleep, but still the picture of the dying man rose up to his imagination. He was a

"young man," and the young student felt compelled to place himself on his neighbour's dying bed, and he could not help fancying what, in such circumstances, would be his thoughts. But the morning dawned, and in the welcome daylight his "superstitious illusions" fled away. When he came down-stairs he inquired of the landlord how his fellow-lodger had passed the night. "He is dead," was the answer. "Dead!" "Yes; he is gone, poor fellow! The doctor said he would probably not survive the night." "Do you know who he was?" "Oh, yes; it was a young man from Providence College—a very fine fellow; his name was E——." Judson was completely stunned. Hours passed before he could quit the house; but when he did resume his journey, the words "Dead! lost! lost!" were continually ringing in his ears. There was no need for argument. God had spoken, and from the presence of the living God the chimeras of unbelief and the pleasures of sin alike fled away. The religion of the Bible he knew to be true; and turning his horse's head towards Plymouth, he rode slowly homewards, his plans of enjoyment all shattered, and ready to commence that rough and uninviting path which, through the death-prison at Ava and its rehearsal of martyrdom, conducted to the grave at Maulmain.[1]

Our last example we take from the proceedings of a Society which has rescued many a wandering youth, and prevented many more from becoming prodigals. The class which the young foreigner attended was conducted by a dear friend of our own, and it was thus that at a

[1] See Wayland's *Life of Judson*, vol. i. p. 12.

meeting of the Young Men's Christian Association the circumstances were not long ago narrated :—" Nine years ago a young Frenchman presented himself for relief, requesting medicine and assistance. He was wretchedly poor, without food, almost without clothes, a deserter from the French army, and in consequence unable to revisit his native country; and even here, he went in terror that by some means he might be arrested, and made to suffer for his fault. The medicine for which he asked the chemist gave him, and for relief he was directed to the Young Men's Christian Association. He came on Easter Sunday 1855, and found here the welcome with which you are always ready to greet a stranger who comes to throw himself upon your sympathy. He was placed under the care of a Christian gentleman, and under his guidance and teaching he learned the great truths of Christianity, and resolved to devote himself to the service of God. He continued for some time to attend your meetings, which were the source of much benefit to him; but in his altered state of mind he considered it was his first duty to make what reparation he could for the fault of which he had been guilty in deserting his regiment. He returned to France, presented himself to the proper officers, and surrendered himself as a deserter. On his trial much surprise was expressed at his voluntary surrender of himself, and the president specially interrogated him on this point. He replied : ' When I ran away from France I was in the darkness of nature, and under the power of sin; now I have learned the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and am His servant. It is by the teaching

of His Word that I come back to my duty, and submit myself to you for the punishment I have deserved.' Kind friends took an interest in his welfare, and tried to procure a mitigation of his punishment. They were successful. Twelve years' punishment was the ordinary penalty for his offence; this was reduced to four, and the severity of the imprisonment greatly mitigated. After undergoing it for a year and nine months, he was allowed to return to duty in the army. Here he was employed as a sort of regimental clerk for about two years, and then finally granted a discharge. Released from all obligation, he went to Geneva to study for the ministry. When his studies were completed, he laboured for some time in the south of France as an evangelist, and then was appointed to the charge of the French Independent Church at Guernsey. He now stands before you to acknowledge that this happy change of position, and far happier change of mind, he owes to the kindly influence of the Young Men's Christian Association. The starving French deserter who sang in the streets of London for a morsel of bread, is the Pastor M——, who now speaks to you."

THE CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

"WHEREVER I HAVE A TENT, THERE GOD SHALL HAVE AN ALTAR."
John Howard.

"Greet the church that is in their house."—ROM. XVI. 5.

"Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."—MATT. XVIII. 19, 20.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."—COL. III. 16.

"I know him (Abraham) that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord."—GEN. XVIII. 19.

"The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous."—PSALM CXVIII. 15.

THE CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

In Greenland, when a stranger knocks at the door, he asks, "Is God in this house?" and if they answer, "Yes," he enters. Reader, this little messenger knocks at your door with the Greenland salutation. Is God in this House? Were you like Abraham entertaining an angel unawares, what would be the report he would take back to heaven? Would he find you commanding your children and your household, and teaching them the way of the Lord? Would he find an altar in your dwelling? Do you worship God with your children? Is there *a Church in your house?*

If not, then God is not in your house. A prayerless family is a godless family. It is worse. It is a family on which Jehovah frowns. He will pour out His fury upon it some day. "O Lord, pour out Thy fury upon the heathen that know Thee not, and upon the families that call not on Thy name."[1] A prayerless family and a heathen family are here accounted the same.

[1] Jer. x. 25.

I cannot mention all the reasons in favour of family worship; but if you ponder them, the four following should suffice:—

1. The godly householders mentioned in Scripture practised it. Would you desire to be like Abraham, the friend of God? Wherever he pitched his tent, he builded an altar, and called on the name of the Lord;[1] and Jehovah declared concerning him, "I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord."[2] Would you like to resemble Job, "the perfect and upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil?" He used to bring his children together, and rose early in the morning, and offered a sacrifice of as many victims as he had sons and daughters, teaching us how express and special our intercession for our families should be, and this he did "continually."[3] Would you resemble David, the man after God's own heart? At the close of a busy day, we find him going "home to bless his household."[4] Do you envy Cornelius, whose prayers were heard, and to whom the Lord sent a special messenger to teach him the way of salvation? He was "a devout man, one who feared God *with all his house,* and prayed to God always;" and who was so anxious for the salvation of his family, that he got together his kinsmen and near friends, that they might be ready to hear the apostle when he arrived, and share with himself the benefit.[5] Do you admire Aquila and Priscilla, Paul's "helpers in Christ Jesus," and who were

[1] Gen. xii. 7, 8; xiii. 4, 8. [2] Gen. xviii. 19. [3] Job i. 5, 8.
[4] 1 Chron. xvi. 43. [5] Acts x. 2, 24, 31, 33.

so skilful in the Scriptures, that they were able to teach a young minister the way of God more perfectly? You will find that one reason for their familiarity with Scripture was, that they had "a Church in their house."[1] In the Bible you find instances of family devotion in all ranks of life, from the king to the artisan, from David's palace to the tent of Aquila; to teach you that whatever be your situation in life, you should still have a Church in your house. I have sometimes seen family worship in great houses; but I have felt that God was quite as near when I knelt with a praying family on the earthen floor of their cottage. I have known of family worship among the reapers in a barn. It used to be common in the fishing-boats upon the firths and lakes of Scotland. I have heard of its being observed in the depths of a coal-pit. I scarcely know the situation in life in which a willing family might not contrive to pray together. If you live in a scoffing ungodly neighbourhood, so much the better. Abraham built his altar whilst heathen Canaanites looked on. He lifted up a testimony for God, and God honoured him—so that Abimelech, his neighbour, was constrained to say, "God is with thee in all that thou doest."[2]

2. Wherever religion revives, family worship abounds. When the Spirit is poured out upon the house of David, "the land shall mourn, every *family* apart."[3] I can remember no instance of a great revival, of which this was not an attendant sign. Listen to the account which Mr. Baxter gives of Kidderminster during his ministry:

[1] Acts xviii. 26; Rom. xvi. 5. [2] Gen. xxi. 22. [3] Zech. x. 12.

"On the Lord's day there was no disorder to be seen in the streets, but you might hear a hundred families singing psalms and repeating sermons, as you passed through the streets. When I came thither first, there was about one family in a street that worshipped God and called on His name, and when I came away there were some streets where there was not above one family in the side of a street that did not so; and that did not, by professing serious godliness, give us some hopes of their sincerity: and those families which were the worst, being inns and alehouses, usually some persons in each did seem to be religious. Some of the poor men did competently understand the body of divinity, and were able to judge in difficult controversies. Some of them were so able in prayer, that very few ministers did match them in order, and fulness, and apt expressions, and holy oratory with fervency. Abundance of them were able to pray very laudably with their families or with others. The temper of their minds and the innocency of their lives was much more laudable than their parts." When the Spirit is poured upon us, our cities will all present a similar aspect.

3. It would make your home much happier if you had a Church in your house. It has been said with much truth, "Family prayer is the oil which removes friction, and causes all the complicated wheels of the family to move smoothly and noiselessly." It is one way, and the very best, for bringing all the members of a family together, and for promoting that harmony of feeling so essential to domestic enjoyment. Some families are held

together by hardly any bond, except that they lodge under the same roof, and assemble round the same board. But when they meet, it is not to fulfil one another's joy. They are selfish and sullen; cross words, peevish answers, and angry recriminations make up all their intercourse. The customary meal is despatched in a gloomy silence, or embittered by fretful words. I have known families so little at home with one another, that it was quite a relief when any casual visitor dropped in to break the irksomeness of their own society. I have seen brothers and sisters so ill-assorted in the families in which God had planted them together, that they had no subject of common interest and no mutual love nor confidence. They could converse and be happy with strangers, but not with one another. And I have seen this in families where there was a form of family worship—a pretence, a semblance of prayer,—but never where there was the reality. If yours be such a family, before peace and affection visit it, you must say, "Come and let us seek the Lord." If you would see the dawn of blander days on that clouded and lowering circle, you must cry, "Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us, and so we shall be glad." If you could only persuade them to take into their hands the volume that speaks goodwill to man, and as they sit together to read by turns its messages of kindness; and then as they bowed before the mercy-seat, if in their common name, you said, *Our Father*, and confessed their common sins, returned thanks for any mercies which the day had brought, and asked such blessings as all need, this process could not be long

persisted in, till you would see its softening and harmonizing influence. The dew of Hermon would begin to come down, and you would exclaim as you saw the difference, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." [1]

But perhaps your family dwells in unity—but it is not a holy unity. It is not sanctified by the Word of God and by prayer. You are happy in one another. You are never at a loss for the materials of a cheerful intercourse. But amidst all the sprightliness, and cordiality, and kind feeling which encompass your fireside, one ingredient of gladness is wanting. God is forgotten. In the morning, you meet and give one another a joyous greeting, and the morning meal despatched, rush away to the day's engagements without a word of acknowledgment to that God whose sleepless eye guarded your midnight pillow—without one word of prayer to bespeak His upholding and guidance in this day's untrodden path. And when the evening hour of intercourse is over, and you have discussed the pleasant or prosperous incidents of the day, you hie away, *cheerful* but *unthankful*, to a prayerless slumber, perhaps to awake in death's dark valley, and find that the Lord is not with you. Your family is united—but it is a short-lived union. Your family-love—God is not in it, and therefore heaven does not follow after it. How it would give tone and intensity to the affection of your smiling circle, if you could be brought to love one another *in the Lord!* With what new eyes you would learn to look upon yourselves, if

[1] Psalm cxxxiii.

you came to regard one another as brethren for eternity! And how it would heighten bliss, and take the sharpness out of sorrow, if "For ever with the Lord," were the thought which joy and grief most readily suggested! Were it manifest of all the members of a family that God is their Father, Christ their Elder Brother, and the Holy Spirit their Comforter, such a family would possess a joy which the removal of no member could take away. That joy has often come into households through the channel of domestic devotion. For,

4. Family worship is an ordinance which God has often blessed to the saving of souls. In houses where it is conducted with life and feeling, it has often proved a converting ordinance. A few years ago, an English gentleman visited America, and spent some days with a pious friend. He was a man of talent and accomplishments, but an infidel. Four years afterwards he returned to the same house, a Christian. They wondered at the change, but little suspected when and where it had originated. He told them that when he was present at their family worship, on the first evening of his former visit, and when, after the chapter was read, they all knelt down to pray—the recollection of such scenes in his father's house long years ago rushed in on his memory, so that he did not hear a single word. But the occurrence made him *think*, and his thoughtfulness ended in his leaving the howling wilderness of infidelity, and finding a quiet rest in the salvation wrought out by Jesus Christ. In his *Fireside*, Mr. Abbot tells us of a gay young lady who paid a visit of a week in the family of

a minister, an eminently holy man. His fervent intercessions for his children and the other inmates of his dwelling went to this thoughtless heart: they were the Spirit's arrow, and upon that family altar his visitor was enabled to present herself a living sacrifice to God. It is with the Church in the house as with the Church in the village. The wayfarer may get a word in passing, which he never can forget. The stranger that turns aside to tarry for a night may hear at your family worship the word that will save his soul. Some years ago, an Irish wanderer, his wife, and his sister, asked a night's shelter in the cabin of a pious schoolmaster. With the characteristic hospitality of his nation, the schoolmaster made them welcome. It was his hour for evening worship, and when the strangers were seated, he began by reading slowly and solemnly the second chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians. The young man sat astonished. The expressions, "Dead in trespasses and sins," "Children of wrath," "Walking after the course of this world," were new to him. He sought an explanation. He was told that this is God's account of the state of man by nature. He felt that it was exactly his own state. "In this way I have walked from my childhood. In the service of the God of this world we have come to your house." He was on the way to a fair, where he intended to pass a quantity of counterfeit money. But God's Word had found him out. He produced his store of coin, and begged his host to cast it into the fire; and asked anxiously if he could not obtain the Word of God for himself. His request was complied with, and next morning, with their new treasure.

the party, who had now no errand to the fair, returned to their own home. Perhaps, by this time, the pious schoolmaster has met his guest within the gates of the city, outside of which are thieves, and whatsoever maketh a lie. But I cannot enumerate all the conversions which have occurred at the Church in the house. Many servants have been awakened there. Children have often heard there truths, which, when the Spirit brought them to remembrance in after days—perhaps, in days of profligacy, and when far from their father's house—have sent home the prodigal. It is not only of Zion's solemn assemblies, but of Jacob's humble dwellings—the little fireside sanctuaries—"that the Lord shall count when He writeth up the people, This man was born there." In your house there have been, perhaps, several immortal spirits born into the world. Have there been any born again?

Prayerless parents! Your irreligion may prove your children's damnation. They might have been within the fold of the Saviour by this time, had not you hindered them from entering in. That time when God visited your family with a heavy stroke, they were thoughtful for a season, but there was no Church in your house to give a heavenly direction to that thoughtfulness, and it soon died away. That evening when they came home from the Sabbath-school so serious, if you had been a pious father or mother, you would have taken your boy aside, and spoken tenderly to him, and asked what his teacher had been telling him; and you would have prayed with him, and tried to deepen the impression. But your children came in from the church or school, and found no Church

in their father's house. Their hearts were softened, but your worldliness soon hardened them. The seed of the kingdom was just springing in their souls, and by this time might have been a rich harvest of salvation; but in the atmosphere of your ungodly house, the tender blade withered instantly. Your idle talk, your frivolity, your Sunday visitors, your prayerless evening, ruined all. Your children were coming to Christ, and you suffered them not. And you will not need to hinder them long. The carnal mind is enmity against God; but no enmity so deep as theirs who were almost reconciled and then drew back. You drove your children back. You hardened them. They may never more be moved. They may grow up as prayerless and ungodly as yourself. If God should change yourself, they may soon be too hard for your own tears and entreaties. If you die as you are, their evil works will follow you to the world of woe, and pour new ingredients into your own cup of wrath. Oh! think of these things. A prayerless house is not only a cheerless one, but it is a guilty one; for where God is not, there Satan is.

But I know not why I should multiply words to prove a duty which nature teaches. The poor Pagan with his household gods and family altar will rise in the judgment against some of this generation, and will condemn them. Instead, therefore, of saying more on the obligation and advantages of this most reasonable service, I shall endeavour to give some plain directions to those into whose hearts the Lord has put the desire to begin it.

1. Can you sing? or is there any one in the house

who can? You will find it enliven the service wonderfully if you can make "a joyful noise unto the Lord." The psalm or hymn is a part of the service which the youngest enjoy, and in which they will gladly take a share.

2. There is the reading of the Word of God. You may go straight through, or you may select a course of subjects. For instance, you might read the parables as one series, and the miracles of Christ as another. You might select the biographical portions, and read the lives of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Peter, Paul, etc.; or you might read the Epistles in connexion with the history of the Churches, or individuals, to whom they are addressed. Thus you might compare Ephesians with Acts xviii.–xx., and with Rev. ii. 1–8; or Thessalonians with Acts xvii. 1–13; and you might compare the Psalms with the period in David's history when each one was written, and the Prophecies with those passages which record their fulfilment—a comparison which a Bible with good marginal references will enable you to make. Or you may select passages appropriate to particular seasons. On the morning of a Lord's day, you might read Psalm xlviii., lxiii., lxxxiv., xcii., cxviii.; John xx.; Rev. i., etc. On a sacramental Sabbath, Psalm xxii., xlv.; Isa. liii.; Matt. xxvi.; John vi., etc. It might help to keep attention awake, if each read a verse in rotation. At other times there might be more solemnity if the same person read the whole continuously. It would make it more impressive and more memorable if you occasionally asked a question, or made a few remarks on the passage read.

For instance, you are reading the nineteenth of Luke, and this is your commentary as you go along:

1. "And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.
2. "And, behold, there was a man named Zaccheus, which was the chief among the publicans (or tax-gatherers), and he was rich.
3. "And he sought to see Jesus, who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature."

This was the last time that Jesus passed through Jericho. He had often passed quietly through it before; but now his time was fully come, and he could not be hid. The road was full of passengers at this season at any rate; for it was Passover-time, and they were all going up to Jerusalem. Besides, the sensation in Jericho was increased by the miracle which Jesus had just wrought on the blind beggar, and which we read in the last chapter yesterday. The crowd was so great that Zaccheus could get no opening to push through, and he was so little that he could not see over other people's shoulders.

4. "And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore-tree to see him; for he was to pass that way.
5. "And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house."

How surprised he must have been! Up in the leafy sycamore, he never expected to be noticed. But see! Jesus stands still, and looks at him as if he were about to speak. Perhaps Zaccheus expected to get a rebuke before the multitude for his villanies, when Jesus, in His own gentle way, just says, "Zaccheus, make haste, and come

down, for to-day I must abide at thy house." Grace went with the word.

6. "And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

7. "And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner."

There were many who felt that they had a better right to this distinction than the mean, grasping tax-gatherer. Many of them felt as if they were not SINNERS. It lowered their opinion of Christ, that He would condescend to become the guest of such a man. They little knew the reason.

8. "And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."

How glad he must have been! A happy heart devises liberal things—and so happy had this visit made him, that his greedy soul had no longer love for money. He stood up like one on whom a sudden thought had come, or who wished to give solemnity to what he said, and declared that he would make it all up to those whom he had wronged, and give half his substance to the poor. This was the effect of receiving Jesus. Where the love of Christ enters, the love of the world goes out. What would the murmurers think when they saw this change upon the "sinner!"

9. "And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham."

It was his "joyful receiving" of Jesus which made him

a son of Abraham. It made him more: it made him one of the "sons of God."[1] Have we received Christ? Has His voice ever made us joyful? Have we ever parted with "goods," or anything else, from gratitude to Him? Now let us remember the next verse, for it is one of Christ's own faithful sayings:

10. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

This is one way. Another, and perhaps better way, is to make the members of the family supply the commentary themselves. This evening, before it is so late that you are all sleepy, you sit round the table, each with his Bible open before him; and the passage selected is the forty-fifth of Isaiah.

1. "Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut."

Father. The prophet has been foretelling the fall of Babylon, and here he names its conqueror. Mary, what is his name?

Mary. Cyrus.

Father. Does any one know how long after this it was before Cyrus made his appearance? Can no one tell? George, your Bible has got the date on its margin. Can you tell when Isaiah uttered this prophecy?

George. About 712 years before Christ.

Father. Now, if you will look to the beginning of Ezra, you will see the first year of Cyrus set down there.

[1] John i. 12.

George. Before Christ 536.

Father. Then how long before had the Lord called Cyrus by his name?

George. Nearly 200 years.

Father. It is not very long since John and Henry finished the Life of Cyrus. Do you remember any facts which illustrate this prophecy?

Henry. The Lord says, "I have holden his right hand to subdue nations before him." Cyrus subdued the Lydians with their rich king Crœsus, the Phrygians, the Phœnicians, and many more, as well as the Babylonians.

John. Yes; and when he took Babylon, "the gates were not shut." For the people were all drinking and diverting themselves, when he dried up the river; and had forgot to shut the gates at the end of the streets which open into the river—so that Cyrus had nothing to do but to march down the dry channel, and then climb up the banks into the city.

Father. Very true—but do you remember nothing more about "opening the two-leaved gates?"

Henry. O yes! When the king of Babylon heard the uproar in the city, he sent to find out what was the matter, and when they were opening the palace gates to let out the king's messenger the Persians rushed in and killed the king.

Try to bring out some lesson that may be needed that very day. You read at morning worship that verse, 1 Cor. x. 31:—

"Whether, therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

Father. What does that mean?

John. That everything, however little, we are to do it so as to please God.

Father. Quite so. It means that you, children, when learning your lessons, or at play—that Sarah down-stairs, and your father in his counting-room, should all remember that we have a Father in heaven, and should do *every* thing, the little things and the great things, in the way that pleases Him.

Mother. This was the principle on which Oberlin acted. Here is a passage which I marked, when I read his life not long ago :—

"The views of religion which Oberlin entertained, made him bring the greatest principles to the minutest operation. He would take a stone out of the road, if it were likely to incommode a traveller, on the principle of love to his neighbour; and in this manner he argued respecting all the duties in which mankind are engaged. Take, for instance, a direction to his people on planting trees. This, with other men, would be an affair of convenience; with him, in his circumstances, it was a religious duty. He thus addressed his parishioners:—

"*November* 18, 1803.

"DEAR FRIENDS,—Satan, the enemy of mankind, rejoices when we demolish and destroy. Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the contrary, rejoices when we labour for the public good. You all desire to be saved by Him, and hope to become partakers of His glory. Please Him, then, by every possible means, during the remainder of

the time you may have to live in this world. He is pleased when, from the principle of love, you plant trees for the public benefit. Now is the season. Be willing, then, to plant them. Plant them also in the best possible manner. Remember you do it to please Him. Put all your roads into good condition; ornament them; employ some of your trees for this purpose, and attend to their growth."

Father. Well, let us do like Oberlin. Let us be kind, and obliging, and useful; and remember that nothing is so little, but that we may do it to the glory of God.

The passage which you mean to read with your family, read it carefully over beforehand; and consider what are its most striking points and most useful lessons; and a little practice will make you a good family expositor.

3. The last and most important part of family worship is united prayer. By prayer, I mean the outpouring of an earnest heart in the name of Jesus. It is not prayer when you merely read or repeat a heartless form. You do not ask a blessing on your daily bread, when you merely mutter over it a charm—a few inarticulate words for custom's sake. Nor do you pray when you bend the knee, and read or say a few petitions which you do not feel, and which you forget as soon as you have uttered. It is prayer, when you ask from God blessings which you are really anxious to obtain, and when, in a conviction of your own unworthiness, you ask them for the sake of Him who indeed is worthy, the well-beloved Son of God. It is prayer, when you ask so earnestly that you remem-

ber afterwards what you sought, and so believingly, that, looking up, you expect an answer. Be earnest. Better no prayer, than give your family a distaste at prayer, by your dullness and formality. Be honest. Deal truly with the God of Truth. Do not mock the Searcher of hearts. Give yourself to the Lord—then set up His worship. Go to the Lord Jesus yourself, and then seek to bring your children with you.

In family prayer you may be more minute and specific than it is possible to be in more public services. If you have a deep reverence of God upon your mind, there is no fear that particularity will degenerate into an unholy familiarity. If any of your friends are in affliction, pray for them. If your children are at school, or at a Sabbath-class, pray for their teacher. Pray for your brethren in church-fellowship, that the beauty of the Lord may be upon them, and that they may dwell in love. Pray for the office-bearers of your church; pray for your minister. Endeavour to interest your family in the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, and pray for faithful ministers and missionaries, especially in those places in which you feel most interested. Every morning commit your way to God Bespeak His presence in all the duties and temptations of the day—His blessing on your intercourse; and especially on any means of grace, which you hope to enjoy. Every night commend yourselves to His watchful keeping, that you may sleep and wake with Him. Pray over the Scriptures you have read. And abound in thanksgiving. Cultivate a cheerful and a grateful spirit; think if there be any mercies you have lately received,

and acknowledge them. Has any one arrived from a journey safe and well? Is a sick member of the family restored? Have you heard good news from the far country, tidings from the absent brother? Were you at church or at the prayer-meeting this evening? and did you find it refreshing? Have you read in your "Missionary Magazine" the conversion of a Heathen or a Jew? Have you heard that God is pouring out His Spirit on some corner of our own country? Have you got an answer to a former prayer? Praise the Lord, for it is pleasant.

It will depend on the age of your family and the amount of your leisure how long the service should be. Some hurry it over in a way which shows that they have no heart in it themselves. Others prolong it so, that every one else is wearied. Ten minutes of a formal service will look longer than twice the time when the whole soul is in it.

Be consistent. "Behave yourself wisely in a perfect way. Walk within your house with a perfect heart."[1] If you be devout in prayer, and unholy in practice; if you be heavenly-minded at the hour of worship, and frivolous, or proud, or passionate all the day; if you teach your children in the morning, "Be not conformed to this world," and if half the day's lessons be designed to conform them to the world as nearly as possible; if you pray for your household that you may be all meek, and gentle, and kindly-affectioned one to another, and then treat your servants as haughtily as if they were your slaves or your

[1] Psalm ci. 2.

enemies; your contradictory prayers and practices will be a terrible stumbling-block in their way to the kingdom. God may convert them; but your conduct will make that miracle of grace more surprising still.

Reader, I do not know whether by this time you are almost persuaded, or have actually determined to begin. When I think what you are losing who are strangers to this delightful exercise, and when I further think on the blessed results which might flow from your now beginning it, I am loth to leave off—though it is time we were done. Do you still hesitate? What is your excuse?

"I never saw the advantages you describe. It has always been a dull service wherever I have seen it." But *you* need not make it dull. Throw your whole heart and soul into it, and it will be lively enough. It is often dull because it is a mere form. Do you make it a living service, and it will not be dull. It is often dull because it is tedious. Do not spin it out. Better one paragraph of Scripture, feelingly and intelligently read, than a whole chapter listlessly drawled over. Better a prayer no longer than the publican's,[1] if the whole soul be in it, than a weary form without feeling. Be fervent, and you will not be dull. Family prayer has often been so conducted, that instead of wearying at it, children felt it a punishment to be excluded. I was once told of a cottage patriarch who was born in those days when Scotland had a Church in almost every house. There was one in his father's dwelling; and when he pitched a tent for himself he builded

[1] Luke xviii. 13.

an altar. Round that altar a goodly number of olive plants grew up, but, one by one, they were either planted out in families of their own, or God took them, till he and his old partner found themselves, just as at their first outset in life, alone. But their family worship continued as of old. At last his fellow-traveller left him. Still he carried on the worship by himself. So sweet was the memory of it in his father's house, and so pleasant had he found it in his own, that he could not give it up. But as he sat in his silent habitation, morning and evening, his quivering voice was overheard singing the old psalm-tune, reading aloud the chapter, and praying as if others still worshipped by his side. He had not found it dull.

"I have no time." If you really value time, family prayer is good husbandry of time. What you do with God's blessing is much better and faster done than what you do without it, *and is not so likely to need doing over again.* You will find it here as Sir Matthew Hale found it with the Sabbath. What you take from God He can easily take from you. If other things were equal, I should expect far more to be accomplished in a day by the man whose spirit had been tranquillized, his resolution fortified, and his activity quickened by morning prayer, than from the man who impiously hurried out to do it all without asking God's presence. Philip Henry, who was an excellent economist of time, when early out of bed to hasten the preparations for a day's travel, as he called his children together, used to say to them, "Prayer and provender hinder no man's journey." Try his homely maxim, and you will find it true.

"Our family is so small." How many are there of you? Are there two? Then, "Wheresoever *two*" (see Matt. xviii. 19, 20). John Howard and his valet, as they journeyed from place to place, used to have family worship by themselves, if they could get no one else to join them. "Wherever I have a tent," he would say, "there God shall have an altar." If there be two of you—though it should be but a Ruth and a Naomi, a mother and her daughter, your family is large enough to worship God, and to get the blessing of those who worship him.

"My family is so large. There are so many servants, and often so many visitors, that I have not courage to begin." If your family be large, the obligation to begin is all the greater. Many suffer by your neglect. And if your congregation be numerous, the likelihood that some good will be done is the greater; for there are more to share the benefit. And why want courage? Should not the very fact that you are acknowledging God encourage you? "Them that honour me, I will honour." Begin it believingly, and in the very attempt courage will come.

"But I have no gift of prayer. I cannot lead the devotions of my family." Prayer is the gift of the Holy Spirit.[1] Before you begin, ask God to give you his Spirit to teach you.[2] I have heard of stammering men who were eloquent in prayer, for the Spirit of God spake by them. When you pray, remember that God is listening. You have called on Him to hearken. You have asked Him to lend you an attentive ear, for you are about to ask mercies for yourself and your dearest friends. Remember that God

[1] Rom. viii. 26. [2] Luke xi. 13.

is listening, and you will forget the presence of all besides. And they, in their turn, when they find that you are really praying, will have no time to criticise—for they will be constrained to join you in your prayer.

But perhaps I have not after all touched your real objection. You refuse to pray in your family, because you know that you do not pray in your closet. You evade it, because you know that your life is such that family worship would, in your case, be a mockery, and would only add hypocrisy to sin. Or you are under the influence of that false shame, which will be felt to be the most shameful of all things, when the now affronted Son of God comes again in His glory.[1] Is it so? And are you about to throw away this tract with your purpose unchanged? Then I can only say, that the day is coming, when you will wish that you never had any brethren[2]—that the Lord had written you childless—that you had been a poor outcast with no roof to shelter you, rather than the ungodly husband and father and master, which you this day are—for then you had been free from blood-guiltiness in the case of others' souls.

The considerations by which I have tried to urge you to the discharge of this duty are, the obligations which you owe to yourselves, to your children, and to God: to yourselves, who will never have the same inward happiness, nor the same satisfaction in your family circle, till once the voice of rejoicing, the melody and praise which are heard in the tabernacles of the righteous, be heard in your own: to your children, who will rise up and call

[1] Mark viii. 38. [2] Luke xvi. 27.

you blessed, if you guide their feet into the way of peace: to God, who offers to become the never-slumbering keeper of you and yours, and to uphold your going out and coming in from this time forth for ever. These are the considerations I have used. Some of you may think that I would have succeeded better, if I had dwelt on the beautiful and picturesque of family religion; if I had carried you back to the time when the glory of domestic piety had her habitation in our land, when villages and towns presented a look of Sabbath quietness at the hour of morning prayer, and when night succeeding night repeated the praises of God from the lonely upland cottage to the hamlet on the plain. I might have done this; and I might have planted you amidst the worshipping household, and invited you to listen to the cordial music of their psalm, and the pathos and fervour of their prayer. But one thing hinders me. I know that all that is beautiful and picturesque in domestic devotion, has not only been witnessed but described by those whom its loveliness could never win to an imitation. It is one thing for a heart full of sensibility to be touched by contemplating the beauty and the joys of true devotion, and quite another thing for a renewed heart to feel these joys. Hundreds have been melted by the matchless poem, in which the bard of Scotland describes the worship of a cottage patriarch; but the *Cottar's Saturday Night* never taught any man to pray. It is told of Sir Walter Scott, that sometimes of an evening he took his guests to an arbour on his lawn, and let them hear the distant music of a sacred tune. It came

from the cottage of one of his dependants, and fell touchingly on the ear of the great minstrel himself—but it only touched the ear. He and his visitors went back to the drawing-room at Abbotsford, but it was not to raise with their better skill an evening hymn of thanksgiving to the God of all their mercies. The distant cadence of a covenanting melody was somewhat romantic, but nearer hand it would have blended ill with the dance and the tabret. They all agreed that the voice of psalms from a cottage was picturesque—but that in the mansion, the harp and the viol would be more appropriate.[1] If higher considerations have no weight, I am sure that a little picture-work will not prevail upon you.

Fathers and brethren, some of you are the heads of happy families to-day. All that I ask is, that you would make them happier still—happy, not only in your love, but in the love of God the Saviour, happy for time and through eternity. The happiest family will not be always so. The most smiling circle will be in tears some day. All that I ask is, that you would secure for yourselves

[1] These merry halls were soon after silent, and "the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers" has never since been heard in them. The "psalm-singing" servant was a brother born for adversity, and on the breaking up of the establishment, refused to leave his master, and rather than leave him offered to serve for nothing. In his new post of ploughman, it affected the poor Baronet to hear "Old Peep" whistling to his team, as he trod the fresh-turned furrows. It was a change to both; but it would seem that the one possessed a source of perennial joy which outward calamities could not dry up nor trouble. And after all, in an angel's eye, which is the greater genius—the sublimer spirit—the poet on his Pegasus, or the peasant, who in the hour of calamity can take the wings of a dove, and fly away and be *at rest?* Who that has read the latter days of Robert Burns, does not wish that he had been his own *Cottar?* He sometimes wished it himself. The son of Bosor is not the only man whom the sight of Jacob's goodly tents has made to sigh, "Let me die the death of the righteous."

and your children a friend in that blessed Redeemer, who will wipe all tears from all faces. Your families may soon be scattered, and familiar voices may cease to echo within your walls. They may go each to his own, and some of them may go far away. O see to it, that the God of Bethel goes with them, that they set up an altar even on a distant shore, and sing the Lord's song in that foreign land. They may be taken from this earth altogether, and leave you alone. O see to it, that as one after another goes, it may be to their Father's house above, and to sing with heavenly voices, and to a heavenly harp, the song which they first learned from you, and with you often sang together here—the song of Moses and the Lamb. And if you be taken, and some of them be left, see to it that you leave them the thankful assurance that you are gone to their Father, and your Father, their God, and your God. And, in the meanwhile, let your united worship be so frequent and so fervent, that when you are taken from their head, the one whose sad office it is to supply your place, as priest of that household, shall not be able to select a chapter or a psalm, with which your living image and voice are not associated, and in which you, though dead, are yet speaking to them. And thus my heart's wish for you all,

When soon or late you reach that coast,
O'er life's rough ocean driven;
May you rejoice, no wanderer lost,
A family in heaven.

THE

DEW OF HERMON;

OR,

THE TRUE SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN UNITY.

"Behold, how good a thing it is,
And how becoming well,
Together such as brethren are
In unity to dwell."

THE DEW OF HERMON;

OR,

THE TRUE SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN UNITY.

By all accounts there are few mountains drenched in more copious dew than Hermon. That dew is Hermon's "life." It waters every living plant, from the soft bunches of hyssop and the little cushions of scented thyme, up to the oak, with his rugged arms and his stiff leaves of evergreen,—from the lily in the valley to the lichen on the rocky height. It waters and refreshes them all. It has no effect on the dust, the pebbles, and the lifeless herbs; but wherever there is life it gives that life more abundantly,—so abundantly that no one grudges the other's share. The lowly hyssop does not envy the lofty oak, and what fills the rose-cup is not robbed from the tiny moss. When that dew distils, all rejoice together, and the more cause one has for rejoicing, the more cause have all. Where the magazine of supply is heaven, there is no room for envy; for however much is given there is always more to give.

The dew coming down on Hermon is an emblem of the Holy Spirit descending on a Church. Wherever he comes down there are freshness, life, and beauty. Every living thing revives, and the more one gets the better it is for all.

But there were more hills than Hermon: Zion lay further south, and so stood in more need of the distilling dew. And Zion also got it. The dew of Hermon descended on the mountains of Zion, and there it produced the self-same effects. Zion was revived and refreshed as Hermon had been. Zion and Hermon were far asunder; but they were brethren, and the Lord commanded the same blessing on them both; nor did Hermon lose by what Zion got.

And when the Psalmist saw this, he said, "Behold how good, and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! As the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." They were both sacred mountains, both within the confines of the Holy Land; but they were not the same. Their forms were different, and different productions grew on each. But Hermon did not quarrel with Zion; nor did the vines and olives of Zion grudge that the oaks and pasture of Hermon were enriched with God's full flood as well as themselves. It were even thus if believing brethren would dwell in unity. There is enough in the residue of the Spirit to enrich and revive them all.

But more than this. Did brethren dwell in unity, the same dew which revives and gladdens Hermon would be

poured out on the dry ground till it was as green and lovely as that hill of God. When believers are so filled with the life-giving and love-diffusing Spirit of God, as to realize the unity of the Spirit,—in other words, when they are one,—the world will join the Church,—the world will in its turn believe.

That the unity of believers and the conversion of the world are intimately connected, is evident from the intercessory prayer of the Lord Jesus. That the unity of believers and the conversion of the world both await the great New Testament promise, the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit, is evident by reading that prayer in connexion with the discourse which preceded it:—

THE PROMISE.

"When He (the Comforter) is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."[1]

THE PRAYER.

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are

[1] John xvi. 8-11.

one : I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."[1]

It must be a singular blessing which the Son of God implored thus earnestly, and on the obtaining of which he knew that such mighty results depended. Until it be bestowed, the joy of the Saviour and the beauty of His blood-bought Church are incomplete, and the world's conversion is deferred. And as they can have little of the Master's spirit who do not sympathize in the prayer which, when His hour was come, He lifted up His eyes to heaven and offered, so they have much to animate their hopes, their exertions, and their prayers, who long for the Church's unity. Each prayer of the Divine Redeemer is a prophecy. There are omniscience and omnipotence in His supplications! and after the Great Intercessor has said (as here He says) I WILL, all that is wanting to the answer is the Amen of an awakened and sympathizing Church. Were believers to agree as touching this thing,—were the "even so" of strong desire and consentaneous prayer not contradicted by opposing practice, the fiat would speedily go forth. Whilst we were yet speaking God would answer; and by union in prayer, prepared for unity in faith and practice, we should rise from our knees to behold that blessed sight, the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of our God and his Christ. Believers would be one, and as a consequence the world would believe.

[1] John xvii. 20-23.

Taking it as a token for good that so many thoughts are now turned towards this object, but fearing that some pray for it who "know not what they ask," believing too that it will be most desired by those who understand it best, it will be our endeavour first of all to ascertain what that "oneness" of His people is for which the Lord Jesus prayed; and then we shall perceive more clearly the likeliest means of securing it.

1. It is a union of *believers:* "I pray for them which shall believe on me."[1] In other words, it is a union of regenerate men. It is a union of those who are one with God: "That they may be ONE IN US." Believing in Jesus, or peace with God, is the basis of Christian unity.

The sinner and the living God are far asunder,—as widely severed as the love of holiness on the one side and the love of sin on the other can sunder them. The *careless* sinner is as remote from God as an atheistic spirit —as an evil heart of unbelief can carry him: and the *convinced* sinner is as far away from God as the guilty misgivings of a conscience awake to the enormity of unpardoned sin can keep him. *Hatred*—carnal enmity—keeps the unwakened sinner standing afar off: *suspicion*, distrust, keeps the anxious sinner nearly as far. And it is not till the Lord Jesus, the Peacemaker, comes and lays his hand of conciliation and love on the sinner, and brings him near to a propitious God, that the last trace of the hatred disappears, and the suspicion is supplanted by confidence and joy. From that moment forward the

[1] John iii. 3, 9, 14, 15; 1 John v. 1.

antagonism between God and the sinner is ended. The controversy of many a guilty year is succeeded by a covenant of everlasting peace. The two walk together, because they are agreed. The sinner, renewed and reconciled, is of one mind with God—loves the same things which God loves—seeks the same end which God also seeks, even God's own glory—and the Spirit of Christ dwelling in him, he now dwells in God. In this sense all regenerate men are one: they are one in God. Of every true believer it may be truly said, whether he dare to say it of himself or not, "Christ liveth in him: He dwelleth in God."

Now, no man is a Christian till he is thus made one with God. If he be thus made one with God, he is a Christian, though some circumstance should hinder him from joining any Church on earth; and if he be not thus made one with God, he may join the purest and most scriptural Church on earth, and not be a Christian after all. The Church of the living God consists of regenerate men. A carnal man in a spiritual Church is carnal still: a spiritual man in a corrupt Church is spiritual still. He is the citizen of Zion—not who dwells within the stone walls of any earthly sanctuary—not who dwelleth with any sect or party here—but who dwelleth in God and God in him. All such men are actually one. In heaven all such men are *visibly* one; and it would be best for the world if even on earth all such men were ostensibly as well as virtually one.

The union for which the Lord Jesus prayed was, a union of spiritual men—a union not of mere professors, but of

His true disciples—a union *in the Lord*—IN US. Any other union is little worth. A union of professors with professors—of one dead Church with another dead Church—is but a filling of the charnel-house, a heaping of the compost-pile. A union of dead professors with living saints, this union of life and death, is but to pour the green and putrid water of the stagnant pool into the living spring. It is not to graft new branches into the goodly vine, but to bandage on dead boughs that will but deform it. It is not to gather new wheat into the garner, but to blend the wheat and chaff again together. It is not to gather new sheep into the fold, but it is to borrow the shepherd's brand and imprint it on the dogs and wolves and call them sheep. The identifying of christened pagans with the peculiar people, has done much dishonour to the Redeemer, has deluded many souls, and made it much more difficult for the Church to convince the world.

It was not this amalgamation of the Church and the world which the Saviour contemplated when He prayed for His people's unity. It was a union of spiritual men—a holy unity—springing from oneness with Himself. Union with Christ is an indispensable preliminary to union with the Church of Christ. An individual must be joined to Christ before he can be a true member of the Church of Christ. And those individuals and those churches which are the most closely joined to Christ, are the nearest to one another, and will be the first to coalesce in fulfilment of Christ's prayer, "May they all be one."

The more faith there is in the earth, the more foundation there is for Christian unity. But the Holy Spirit is the author of faith. It is He who reveals Jesus and glorifies Him.[1] It is He who unites the soul to Christ. It is He alone who can fill churches with living members, that is, with the elements of Christian unity.

2. It is an orthodox union. Any price is too little to pay for such a blessing, except the faith once delivered to the saints. This we must not sell; and, happily, there is no need. "When he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." The author of unity is the Spirit of Truth; and it is by causing believers to see eye to eye, that He will join them heart to heart. It cannot be a close and healthful union which includes an error or rejects a truth. And, taking it for granted that all which God has been pleased to reveal it is possible to ascertain, and that all which we ascertain we are bound to believe, if asked, On what platform the Church is likely at last to unite? we answer, On the platform of orthodoxy. It is pride which perpetuates error. The wars and fightings and false doctrines of Christian men have one parentage; they come from their remaining "lusts."[2] These lusts no power can subdue, except the Omnipotent Spirit. He alone can annihilate pride and pugnacity, and make men so earnest and docile that they will freely part with long cherished error, and accept, meekfully and joyfully, long-rejected truth. And when he has given the Lord's people a quiet and weaned spirit, he will secure a frank and

[1] John xvi. 14. [2] James i. 21; iv. 1.

cheerful admission for every truth which the Word of God contains. There will be no triumph of partisanship, and no humiliation in concession, when each feels that it is not human might nor power, but the Spirit of the Lord, which is winning truth's victory over error. The latitudinarian unity which surrenders truth for peace, and purity for quiet, is not the unity for which the Saviour prayed. Truth and love, purity and peace, are each such a blessing, that He designs that His Church should enjoy them all: and when the residue of the Spirit is bestowed, they will be one and all vouchsafed. Far from fancying that the creed of a united Church will be that scantling of truth which remains after every man has subtracted the doctrines against which he entertains a prejudice, we are assured that the eventful confession of the Church's faith will be more exact and comprehensive than any existing standard, for it will include the entire revelation of God. It will contain as many articles as there are texts in Scripture. It will be the Bible understood according to the mind of Him who gave it; the Bible read with the inspiring Spirit for the infallible interpreter. When the Spirit of the Lord lifts up that standard, and displays it to believing eyes, He will make it the rallying-point of a re-uniting Church. Led into *all* truth, and sanctified through the truth, believers will be one.

3. It is a union resulting from individual believers becoming eminently like to the Lord Jesus Himself. "The *glory* which Thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one." On which wonderful words you will find a comment in 2 Cor. iii. 18: "We all with open

face beholding as in a glass the *glory* of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The man who eyes Immanuel most eagerly and steadfastly—the man who by the Spirit is transformed into the closest resemblance to the Son of God, is the man most prepared to repeat and fulfil this prayer. The most Christ-like Christian is the most truly catholic; his love comprehends all saints. One *glory* of the Lord Jesus was His patience. The dulness of disciples was wearisome: to most of us it would have been provoking; but it did not disgust or irritate their Master. They were slow to understand; but their Teacher was the Lamb of God. They were dull; but He was gentle and patient, and took infinite pains with them. He knew that they loved Him, and that they believed Him; so He bore with much carnality, much obtuseness, and many misconceptions. He rather thought of what they were yet to be, than of what they already were; and by the pains He took with them, He made them what He wished them to be. They showed much bigotry. They marvelled why He talked with a Samaritan woman.[1] It was His meat and drink to do such things; and in the conversion of that woman and many of her fellow-townsmen, He gave them an affecting reason for talking with Samaritans. They showed grievous sectarianism. They would rather that a man should be possessed by the devil, than that one not belonging to their own company should cure him: "We forbade him, because he followeth not with us."[2] They could not say that he was not a

[1] John iv. 27. [2] Luke ix. 49.

follower, for they had heard him use their Master's name; but he followed not *with them.* The Saviour rejoiced to hear that devils were cast out, and that this man had faith to do it in Christ's name; and so He taught the disciples that there was something more important still than following *with* them. They often exhibited painful infirmity and inconsistency; but He had called and chosen them, and they were His friends, so He did not cast them off. And such was the effect of intercourse with Himself—beholding His glory and drinking of His spirit—such was the result of His perseverance and affectionate painstaking, that in patience and magnanimity and largeness of soul they at last became wonderfully like to their Master. What was His own glory was transferred to them. And when more of Christ's glory is given to the Church—when believers become more Christ-like, they will become not more tolerant of error, but more tolerant of one another. They will feel such compassion for a world possessed by the devil that they will rejoice when they hear that any is loosed from Satan's bond, whoever spoke the word. They will feel such concern for their Master's honour, as will make them forget their own prerogative. The name of Jesus will be so dear to them, that they will be glad to hear it coming from any lips, and to find it working signs, even though a stranger use it. The great desire will be, not that particular Churches should increase, or particular congregations should increase, so much as that Christ should increase. And if so be that *He* is preached, whether it be by unamiable and contentious men, or by loving and con-

sistent disciples, notwithstanding, every way, they will rejoice.[1] Such believers there have already been; men in whom the love of Jesus swallowed up every sordid and selfish feeling. Were they but multiplied till our Churches contained no other members, the day for healing our divisions would not be distant. Carnality is the great source of religious contentions; and the great subduer of carnality is the sanctifying Spirit. Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and the sanctifying Spirit glorifies Jesus by receiving of His, and showing it—transferring it—to His disciples.[2] It is He who, changing them into the same image, can make them the sons of peace.

4. But we must go further, and add that, except in one brief earnest at the beginning, and a few local and partial vouchsafements since, this prayer of the Saviour has not been fully answered yet. When the early rain of the Spirit was given, there was a momentary foretaste of what shall yet be seen, on a scale vastly more magnificent and permanent. "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the HOLY GHOST; and they spoke the Word of God with boldness. And *the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul:* neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And *with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all.*"[3] Here great grace and great power were the accompaniments of unity. Grace, power, and unity all came together, and

[1] Phil. i. 15-18. John xvi. 14. [3] Acts iv. 31-33.

all came from the singular descent of the Holy Spirit. The prayer of the Saviour was for that instant answered; his people for the time were one; and the impression on the world was great. But that oneness of the primitive Church was only a moment's sun-blink. It ceased long before the apostles died. When Paul parted from Barnabas,[1] and when Peter was rebuked because he was to be blamed,[2] there were symptoms of the Great Comforter departing. And any one who reads the Epistles to the Corinthians and Galatians, and to the Seven Churches of Asia, will see painful indications that the disciples had long since ceased to be "of one heart and one soul." Many think that if they could only get the Church back to the primitive model, Christ's prayer would be answered. We cannot think so. Unless by the *primitive*, they mean the *Pentecostal* model, something would be desiderated before the Church became what the Church should be;—before it coalesced in such identity of spirit and amalgamation of love, that disciples could be said all to be one, even as Christ and the Father are one. Read the following extracts from apostolic epistles, and say if you would not desire some greater unity for a Church that is to convert the world? "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions (or schisms) among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among

[1] Acts xv. 39. [2] Gal. ii. 11-14.

you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ."[1] "I wrote unto the church; but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words; and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church."[2]

In the days of the apostles there was little or no dissent —little or no secession—but still there was not unity; disciples were not sufficiently *one* to convert the world. With the litigious Corinthians and Judaizing Galatians, with pragmatical teachers like Diotrephes, and ostentatious preachers like those who thought to add affliction to the apostle's bonds, Paul and John had as much reason to sigh after true Christian unity as any faithful minister or Christian now. When Paul wrote those tremulous entreaties, agonizingly imploring his own converts, "If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, —fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory;" and when John penned those epistles, with love and healing flowing along each line, it is too evident, in the reluctant allusion to divisions which darkens even his bright pages, that these works of the flesh were not unknown among the Churches which had been planted and tended by the gentlest of

[1] 1 Cor. i. 10–12. [2] 3 John 9, 10.

apostolic hands. When we look back on the primitive Church, we dare not say that, except during the brief hour of its Pentecostal prime, it came up to the Lord's behest when He prayed for its unity,—for there were not many Churches even then, which could give the heathen cause to say, "Behold how these Christians love one another!" A Church truly one—a unanimous cordial company, free from selfishness and indivisible—not packed into the mere shell of outside uniformity, nor constricted into uneasy and precarious juxtaposition by the green withes of a temporary and self-suggested expediency—but gravitating towards each other by the polarization of truth and love; such a united, world-converting, and God-glorifying Church we believe to be the glory of the latter day, and the crowning achievement of the Holy Spirit.

One good purpose will be answered, if these remarks show what is *not* Christian unity.

Mere denominational uniformity is not Christian unity. It is a favourite project with many in the present day to single out some sect—usually their own—and then say to themselves, "If we could only get all the world to join us, there would be unity." And so possessed are they with the notion that the unity of the Church consists in conformity to them, that many of them have determined to know nothing among men, save their Church (meaning their own community), and conformity thereto. Their union is separation from non-canonical Christians; and could they but make one font, one surplice, and one service-book for all, they are persuaded the Church would

be one. In place of unity of spirit, they labour for unity of costume. They cannot understand a united family which does not wear a regimental uniform. We, on the other hand, have seen an uniformity where there was nothing but the form. The Church of the middle ages was united just as the sleepers in the funeral vault are united, in the tranquillity of death. It was like listening at the door of a sepulchre: Hush! for all is peace within. Enter, and all is uniform—uniformly dead—black frieze and rottenness—a sepulchre of souls. The Church of the early centuries was united, as scorpions are united when one glass receiver holds them and leaves them room to fret about, and strike their stings into one another. There was uniformity, but it was not unity, for the world did not believe. The world saw it and was hardened; the world saw it and blasphemed. To preserve the unity of the Church they excommunicated or burned alive those who thought or believed for themselves; till faith had well nigh perished from the earth. The Church became so catholic, that there was no place found for the Gospel. The union of coercion, or the union which, as the first term of communion, takes away your right of private judgment, is not the union contemplated by Him, the first law of whose kingdom is love, and the first gift of whose Spirit is light.

Again. For the sake of unity, it is not needful to surrender an iota of the truth, or yield one conscientious conviction, so long as it remains conscientious. It is very common with those who misunderstand the matter, to say, "Come, now, you and I do not think exactly alike; per-

haps we are both right, and it is as likely we are both wrong. But it is a point of no moment; what would you say to throw it overboard altogether, and give ourselves no more concern about it?" To which, *in many cases,* it might be a very just answer—"You may intend this for liberality, but to me it sounds like latitudinarianism. I believe that I found this truth in the Bible; and if so, it is one of the truths of God. I dare not cast it overboard; and I shall be very sorry if having it on board deprive me of your company. If it be so offensive to you that you must needs sail in a separate ship, I hope we shall not hoist hostile flags. But as neither of us holds it vital, might we not agree to differ regarding it; and as we grow in knowledge and in grace, may we not hope that the Lord will reveal even this unto us?" Wherever souls are joined to the Lord Jesus, and His image is visible upon them, there is actual unity of the most important kind. Were this actual unity more frequently made the foundation of a practical unity, there would soon be more doctrinal unity among Christians. But it is an unhallowed mode of procuring practical unity to purchase it at the price of truth. As a compromise of error cannot lead to unity, so "truth in love" will breed no schism.

Christian unity is the union of believers—union in the truth—union in the Lord. Like every good and perfect gift, it cometh down from the Father of Lights. It is given where the Holy Ghost is given. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is love as well as liberty. This suggests, as the first and main step towards the attainment of the blessing,

1. Prayer for the larger effusion of the Spirit on the Churches. Something like a visible unity has already been witnessed when believers throughout the world agreed to make request for a common cause. This was to some extent the case in a union for prayer widely observed last autumn. It was kept by some Christians of almost every communion and every clime; and for the time being they were one. One Spirit of Supplication taught them; one common object drew them; one mind and heart were given them. For the moment they were one. And there have since been evident signs that God did not turn away that prayer from Him. He has enlarged the coasts of some and the hearts of others. A few agreed as touching the thing which they asked, and partial though the union was, the answer has at least sufficed to show, "Ye have not because ye ask not."

During a revival of religion, it is so natural for disciples to love one another, that "church order" is frequently invaded, and denominational distinctions are forgotten in the affectionate freedom of Christian intercourse. During the awakening at Cambuslang (1742), Whitfield "was as an angel of God" to the people; and when the revival at Moulin occurred (1798), no preacher was more prized by the minister and his people than Mr. Simeon of Cambridge. Their feet were beautiful in the eyes of Presbyterian people, because they brought good tidings, and the Churchman was merged in the minister of Christ. And though it were for no other reason, a revival of religion should be sought because it would make it natural and safe for ministers and people of different persuasions to

hold fellowship with one another. To render our intercourse generous and confiding, unembarrassed and affectionate, needs the same power which gave "the multitude of them that believed" in early days "one heart and one soul." That power was the Holy Ghost with whom they "all were *filled:*" and He was given in answer to prayer, "when they had lifted up their voice with one accord."[1] Would the multitude of believers now lift up their voice with like unanimity and earnestness, the promise of the Father which we heard from Jesus would be the answer to the prayer. The Holy Ghost would be given: harmony at home and power abroad would be given. The world could not stand before the great boldness and great grace of those whom God had joined together; and as the Church's unity would remove the great obstacle to the world's conversion, the world's conversion would remove the great source of divisions in the Church. Offences in the Church usually enter from the world. Did the Church possess the world, these offences would cease. The world one with the Church, and both one with God, the work of the Comforter would be complete—"the prince of this world would be judged," condemned, dethroned.

2. If unity be the gift of the Spirit, let those believers who long for unity beware of grieving the Holy Spirit of God. He is grieved by carnal contention: He is grieved by those works of the flesh, "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings:"[2] He is grieved when we offend one of Christ's little ones: He is grieved when we seek the things of our own party more than the

[1] Acts iv. 24, 31. [2] Gal. v. 17, 20, 21.

things of Jesus Christ; and He is grieved when we pray for unity, and do not cultivate a kind and fraternal spirit.

3. In order to attain this spirit, let us think how the Saviour feels towards all the members of His body. The Church of Christ looks very different contemplated from the same point of view from which the Son of God surveyed it, when beneath the cross with yearning heart He prayed for it, or viewed by the sectarian from the lonely pinnacle of his frosty partisanship. If we have the mind of Christ, why do we not feel toward His blood-bought Church as He Himself feels towards it? Why is it not all precious to us, when His precious blood is on it all? Each redeemed and regenerate man is dear to the Saviour: can we not find room in our hearts for all? If they be not all exactly to our liking, let us remember that Christ bears with them. If they belong to a denomination which we cannot approve, let us remember that the stiffest sectary will change his denomination the day he joins the Church of the first-born above; and that even we ourselves may see some things differently then. And if we cannot love them as they are, let us love them as they are yet to be. The most shining saint on earth is not so holy nor so beautiful as the least attractive Christian will become the moment his corruption puts on incorruption.

4. Let us study the internal history of the Church, *i.e.*, the history of vital religion, and we shall find that God has greatly owned other Churches besides that of which ourselves are members. The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened as the Lord's people too often are; consequently, the history of real religion during these last ages

is the history of many Churches. Christians, if they were eminently devout and heavenly-minded, look wonderfully like one another when the story of their hidden life is told. When you read the biographies of Brainerd and Martyn and Carey, you do not think of the one as a Presbyterian, and of the other as an Episcopalian, and of the third as a Baptist; but you think of them all as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and men whom their Lord delighted to honour. When you read of the glorious revivals last century in Britain and America, you scarce ever ask to what party did Daniel Rowland and George Whitfield, John Livingstone and President Edwards belong. Would you throw aside the *Pilgrim's Progress*, because you had found out that a Baptist wrote it! Or, in the midst of some noble hymn, would your voice at once grow mute because, on turning the leaf, you found that this good matter had been originally indited by a Nonconformist or a Methodist?

5. Let us remember how important are the points on which believers agree with one another, and in which they differ from the world. Think what is it that makes a Christian. It is not his belonging to any Church on earth, but his "belonging unto Christ." It is not our badge upon his shoulder, but Christ's image on his soul. It is not his believing the Divine warrant of any ecclesiastical polity, but it is his believing in the Saviour himself. It is not his dwelling in our tabernacle, but it is the Spirit of God dwelling in him that makes him a Christian indeed. Compared with these great realities, how insignificant the points in which believers disagree!

and how very different from the world the weakest and most inconsistent saint!

6. Let us cultivate a friendly intercourse with sister Churches. It is our shyness which produces so much estrangement. We would think more highly of one another, if we knew one another better. If you were ever transported to a new district of country, you remember how cold and unfriendly it looked, simply because it was strange. Now that you have been some years in the district, you can hardly recall or believe the shy and suspicious feelings with which you viewed it at first. Here is a cottage where scarce a winter night goes by but you are a visitor; and yet the first time you went that way, you felt a prejudice against it—you did not like its looks—you thought the inhabitants were curious-looking people—and congratulated yourself that you were independent of them, for you were sure you could never take to them. But somehow you got acquainted; you found that they were more amiable and interesting than you had expected. The good-man of the house, whom you did not like at all the first time you saw him, is now your particular friend; and those children whom you thought so oddly dressed that you could not bear them, you are never so happy now as when you have them all clinging about your chair and climbing on your shoulders. A well shut up, a fountain sealed; you have found a spring of unsuspected gladness and refreshment in that uncouth habitation and its grotesque-looking inmates. Perhaps, were you building a house for yourself, you might not choose to copy all its fantastic ornaments and peculiar arrange-

ments; nor might you be disposed to array your household in the peculiar uniform which they have chosen to wear; but still you are thankful that you have got acquainted with these people, and that here is a door whose latch you may lift without knocking any day, and step in and find a welcome and pleasant fellowship, kind hearts, and congenial converse.

The recluse who never darkens his neighbour's door, nor lets his neighbour darken his, will look coldly on all the region round about. When he looks out on the adjacent dwellings, he will think more of the masonry outside than of the furnishing within. His landscape will be a cold panorama of brick and tile, of stones and mortar; without living souls, without bright intellects and warm hearts to people them. And the stranger will feel much like the recluse: it is the masonry that meets his eye and decides his judgment: the inhabitants are all one, for they all are strange. But a neighbourly man, who has lived a long time in the region, and been making his friendly entries from door to door, with him the cold and alien feeling has worn off long since; and when he looks at houses, he is not looking at blue slates and red tiles, but houses richly tinted with those warm life-hues, that firelight colouring of peace and love and joy, which he has seen within; and if he wished to bespeak the stranger's interest in all, he could point out the peculiar trait of excellence in each. "Yon bleak-looking house contains the most united family I ever saw: it would do your heart good to see their mutual affection. Yon other house is a pattern of good order and skilful arrangement. And yonder is a family

to which the whole parish is beholden for their ready-handed liberality, their visits of mercy, and offices of tender sympathy. The people of this house are remarkable for walking in all the ordinances blameless ; so strict, that some would call them stern. And in yon other habitation there is more of joy and praise than I ever found elsewhere. It is thawing, heart-kindling to be with them; it seems to me as if the very house were singing—smiling—glad. I have learned a lesson from every one : I see that wholesome discipline and good government are compatible with good feeling and fraternal concord : I see that much devotion need not hinder much activity : and I do not see why a happy Christian should not be as strict and consistent and unworldly as a gloomy one."

Now which is the happier man,—the recluse, who is his own all-in-all, who finds a bitter food for his misanthropy in sneering at the architectural quaintness or the peculiar garb of his fellows, and who would rather starve in solitude than be fed and warmed at his neighbour's fire ; or, the more large-hearted and confiding citizen who passes from house to house an internuncio of good tidings and kind feelings, carrying from family to family the fragrant report of their mutual excellence, and endeavouring to engender good opinion and lay a foundation for friendly offices ? And which is the likelier to go on unto perfection ? The self-sufficient hermit who has grown so wise that all the world can teach him nothing ; or the candid, docile inquirer, who feels that he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know, and who feels

that it were a becoming end for an ignorant sinner to die learning a lesson? From each circuit of kindness, from each friendly visit, he might come back with a harvest of practical hints and useful suggestions; and, without needing to pull down his house and reconstruct it each time, or without leaving it and removing to another, he might bring with him what would greatly add to its internal comfort and social enjoyment. Would all the evangelical denominations cultivate a cordial intercourse: were we taking as our password the sentence which the Saviour gave us long ago, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren;" were we in this spirit to meet and hold converse, and consult about our Master's interests, almost every end of Christian union should be answered. From every such re-union we should return refreshed. Mutual jealousy would melt away. We should not need to obtrude our peculiarities on one another; for whatever grace of God we saw in each other, we would be glad and long to share it,—whatever peculiar excellence the one possessed the other would borrow, and the original owner would find himself no loser. Because I am a Presbyterian, must I have no dealings with Episcopalians or Congregationalists? Or when I see the sequestered and unworldly simplicity of the Moravians; the all-enlisting liveliness of the Wesleyans, finding use for every talent and a talent in every member; the deep fervour and spirituality of Welsh Methodists; the serene piety and child-like faith of the Swiss Protestants; and the practical every-day theology and business-like enterprise of the American churches; must I forego all these as denominational

peculiarities which a Presbyterian may not without felony appropriate? Or because I worship in Regent Square, am I to be hindered as I go along Great Queen Street, or Bedford Row, as I pass Surrey or John Street Chapel, and think of our friends and brethren who worship there, from saying, "Peace be within thee?"

7. Let us unite in some common object. The union which has no definite object in view, which is merely a union for union's sake, will hang loosely together and soon dissolve again. The best way to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, is to keep it for some common object. Some think that they have found a rallying-point for the divided Churches on the platform of missionary societies; and it is delightful to think how much rivalry of love and interchange of Christian affection have been elicited in those heart-stirring convocations. But much of that courtesy and cordiality is the propitious effusion of the day, or does not outlive the hour of meeting; and when the speech-makers get back to their homes, when they are withdrawn from the melting atmosphere of the public meeting, they often get frozen up again in their original sectarianism. The brotherly love of many is like the blood of St. Januarius, which melts but once a year. But though the conductors of missionary societies are not always united, the missionaries usually are. Though the men who send them out sometimes ply their denominational controversies with acerbity all the year, and only sign a truce for a few days in the month of May, you will find that the missionaries themselves seldom find leisure for controversy with one another. Why? Because they

have such a terrible controversy with atheism and unbelief, they have such a fight with principalities and powers of darkness, that they have no leisure to fight with one another. In India, in Africa, in Labrador, the denominations dwell in unity. The City Missionaries of London, representing many sects, have no disposition to wage war on one another. They find the hosts of darkness too fierce and powerful to render division safe or desirable. And it is the knowledge of this that makes us think that were the pious and accomplished men who unite at our public meetings to go down from the platform to the mission-field, were the orators themselves becoming missionaries, the union of that hour would become a union for life. The missionary meeting brings the cross in view, —and in the sight of its affecting wonders disciples forget their grudges and their feuds: no man is a sectarian so long as his eye rests on a bleeding Saviour. The missionary meeting brings the miserable Satan-bound world in view, —and in sight of its awful and guilty case no man who loves God's glory or his brother's soul can remain a sectary. But the missionary jubilee ends, and its moving sights fade away: the cross becomes shadowy, or a denominational halo encompasses it: the perishing world falls back into the distance, and it needs the telescope of the sect to catch another sight of it. It would be different did those who this day advocate a common cause really make a common cause of it, and go forth missionaries themselves; not to India, but to England. The controversies which one Evangelic Church has with another—and it is a misnomer calling that a Church which does not preach the

Gospel—are very trivial compared with that controversy which the Church of Christ has with the world. "One heresy, called drunkenness," is ruining far more souls than any Church is saving. The sect of the Sabbath-breakers outnumbers any denomination in England. And there is an infinitely wider interval between the party who deny the sole-sufficiency of the atonement, or who believing it refuse to preach it publicly, than between all the denominations in Europe, whose watchword is the old Reformation talisman, "Jehovah-Tsidkenu,—the Lord our Righteousness."

And whilst there are many parishes in England and Scotland where a free and full salvation is not preached at all, or preached so obscurely that people cannot understand it, or so timidly that they are afraid to believe it; whilst there are myriads in this very city whom you must *compel* to come in, or else they will never come into the house of God at all; whilst many are preaching another Gospel which is not another, and subverting the grace of God, are we to lavish all our strength on ephemeral controversy and mutual recrimination? Are we to waste the rapid days and allow the harvest to rot upon the fields, whilst we are settling which is the best form of the sickle, and debating in what sort of vehicle we shall carry home the sheaves? Are there not all-important truths, for which our concurring testimony, and helping prayers, and mutual countenance, would be all too little to win a nation's reluctant ear; and in the effort to rouse a sleeping world, and convert an ungodly kingdom, will any voice be loud enough except the united cry of an awakening

Church? Amongst the higher orders and middling classes of British society are many who make no religious profession, and many more who make a general profession, but on whom divine realities have such shadowy hold, that in the testing trials of Christian principle you may with painful certainty foretell the result. Amongst the industrious and more dependent classes is a fearful multitude, especially in rural places, whom mental torpor and uninquiring ignorance have prepared for any faith or fancy which authority may enjoin: and another multitude, abounding in cities and manufacturing regions, too acute to credit the dreams of superstition, but in ignorance of revelation and in dislike of its restraints, all too ready to hail the scorning infidelity, which in a land of free inquiry is superstition's unfailing satellite. For such a state of things there is one remedy. It is that only form of truth so important and so true, as to be worthy of the Spirit's demonstration—the truth as it is in Jesus. But to secure wide and efficient circulation for this truth, would need the undiverted strength and diligence of *all* who know and love it. An Evangelic Union for Evangelistic purposes was never more needed than it is this day; and as the materials for such union are not wanting, and the providential call to it is louder every day, why do we postpone? In days of confusion and bloodshed, the first thing that united Europe was a crusade against the infidel. The first thing that will unite a torn and distracted Church, will be a cross-exalting war,—a crusade upon the world,—a simultaneous forthgoing in the wake of that banner, which did we lovingly eye and implicitly

follow, we should conquer at once the world and ourselves. A CONFEDERACY FOR THE RESUSCITATION OF GOSPEL TRUTH AND FOR THE REVIVAL OF TRUE RELIGION WOULD ITSELF BE UNION.

8. Should we find our overtures of kindness and conciliation rejected by any whom we have reason to regard as real disciples, let us not be discouraged. If Christian unity be so important to the cause of Christ, it is surely worth some self-denial and painstaking to secure it. If the burden of the self-denial fall on us, and we receive grace to bear it, it is our privilege to be "the martyrs for charity." It is not enough to sigh after unity; it is not enough to pray for it; if we really desire it, we must labour and deny ourselves, and have long patience to obtain it. And if our motive really be love to the Redeemer, and desire to fulfil His joy, the consciousness that we do it unto Him should be the consolation for many failures; and the recollection that His prayer has insured success, should make us feel that every failure only brings the successful issue nearer.

It is this persuasion which has encouraged this attempt. It will be useful if it arrest the attention of more influential members of the Church, or animate the prayers of those whose influence all lies in the upper sanctuary. If it should fail of those higher ends, it may perhaps fall into the hands of some who will accept it as a statement on behalf of one congregation,[1] who, though they love their own communion much, love the communion of saints still more. Dwelling in unity ourselves, we should

[1] Dr. Hoppus's Essay on "Schism," and Dr. Harris's on "Union."

rejoice to dwell in unity with all our believing brethren. And as we have only found the free expression of our mutual mind promote this unity, so we believe that were there a better understanding among the different denominations, there might be a very full expression of various opinion, and an ample discussion of the advantages of our several systems, without danger of offence; and as the result of all, we might reach, if not a state of perfection, at least a state of much nearer approximation.

We end as we began. Heaven is the abode of unity, and when the spirit of unity comes into a soul or into a Church, it cometh from above. The Comforter brings it down. Discord is of the earth, or from beneath. The divisions of Christians show that there is still much carnality amongst them. The more carnal a Christian is, the more sectarian will he be; and the more spiritual he is, the more loving and forbearing and self-renouncing are you sure to find him. And it is with Christian communities as with individual Christians. When the tide is out, you may have noticed, as you rambled among the rocks, little pools with little fishes in them. To the shrimp in such a pool his foot-depth of salt water is all the ocean for the time being. He has no dealings with his neighbour shrimp in the adjacent pool, though it may be only a few inches of sand that divide them. But when the rising ocean begins to lip over the margin of his lurking-place, one pool joins another, their various tenants meet, and by-and-bye, in place of their little patch of standing water, they have the ocean's boundless fields to roam in. When the tide is out—when religion is low—the faithful are to

be found insulated, here a few, and there a few, in the little standing pools that stud the beach, having no dealings with their neighbours of the adjoining pools, calling them Samaritans, and fancying that their own little communion includes all that are precious in God's sight. They forget for a time that there is a vast and expansive ocean rising—every ripple, every reflux, brings it nearer —a mightier communion, even the communion of saints which is to engulf all minor considerations, and to enable the fishers of all pools, the Christians, the Christ-lovers of all denominations, to come together. When, like a flood, the Spirit flows into the Churches, Church will join to Church, and saint will join to saint, and all will rejoice to find that if their little pools have perished, it is not by the scorching summer's drought, nor the casting in of earthly rubbish, but by the influx of that boundless sea whose glad waters touch eternity, and in whose ample depths the saints in heaven, as well as the saints on earth, have room enough to range. Yes, our Churches are the standing pools along the beach, with just enough of their peculiar element to keep the few inmates living during this ebb-tide period of the Church's history. But they form a very little fellowship—the largest is but little —yet is there steadily flowing in a tide of universal life and love, which, as it lips in over the margin of the little pool, will stir its inhabitants with an unwonted vivacity, and then let them loose in the large range of the Spirit's own communion. Happy Church! farthest down upon the strand! nearest the rising ocean's edge! Happy

Church! whose sectarianism shall first be swept away in this inundation of love and joy! whose communion shall first break forth into that purest and holiest, and yet most comprehensive of all communions,—the communion of the Holy Ghost! Would to God that Church were ours."

THANKFULNESS.

"Ten thousand thousand precious gifts
My daily thanks employ,
Nor is the least a cheerful heart,
That tastes these gifts with joy."

THANKFULNESS.

A THANKFUL Christian is a happy man, and brings peculiar glory to God. Thankfulness is something better than mere cheerfulness. It is a pleasant sight to see a merry, gleesome child, or a placid, contented man; but pleasant as it is to see, it scarcely needs a soul to make a creature cheerful. You may see cheerful sights by cottage fires and on village greens, on the harvest-field and amidst the vintage heaps; but you may see the exact equivalent as often as you look on a bright summer's day at a flock of sheep, or a dancing minnow-pool, or a cloud of insects, swinging mazily to and fro in a field of balmy air. If you reckon the mere gladness, the sensation of delight, beasts are as capable of it as ourselves; and, for anything I know, the swift, shrieking out his ecstasy as he glances round the steeple, or the bee murmuring all his noontide musings into the ear of an opening flower, may be as full of gladness as you ever were when your pulse was bounding bravely, and the joy of felt existence was swelling every vein. I believe that God can fill the tiniest and most transient thing as full of its proper

happiness as he can fill the heart of man; for he can fill it brimful, and human bosom can hold no more. What advantage, then, has man in his enjoyments over the beasts that perish? Why this; his best joys should be spiritual and intellectual,—a domain peculiar to himself; they should be more lasting, also; a tinge of immortality should run through them; and as they are sublimer and more enduring, so they should awaken *gratitude*. Our gladness should take the form of thankfulness. Gratitude is the grace which hallows gladness, and by giving it an upward, God-ward direction, makes it both noble and safe. A joy in which gratitude does not mingle is a dangerous thing; for it is atheistic and God-provoking.[1] And it is a degraded thing; for nature's high-priest, that spokesman and interpreter who should embody in articulate praise the homage of a voiceless universe, and whose adoring capacity is only lower than the angels, ingratitude makes him lower than the oxen; for the ox knoweth his owner, and feels his own kind of thankfulness;—and duller than the stones; for rocks and mountains have their silent anthems, and rather than that none should utter "glory in the highest," the stones would cry aloud.[2]

That man leads the most angelic life whose life is fullest of adoration and thankfulness and praise; but none except the Lord's redeemed can lead that life. None will cry, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good," who have not first tasted that "mercy which endureth for ever."[3] And just as there is no real gratitude which does not come down from above, so there is no

[1] Isa. v. 12. [2] Ps. cxlviii. 9; Luke xix. 37-40. [3] Ps. cxxxvi. 1.

acceptable thank-offering which does not go up through a mediator. "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."[1] "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."[2] Christ is the altar which sacrifices the sinner's gift; and in order that a thank-offering be accepted, it must be laid on this altar. Cain thought that he was thankful. He presented to the Lord the produce of his fields; and perhaps it was, more than a complimentary acknowledgment. Perhaps he felt a gush of emotion as he eyed God's goodness in his ripening acres. But he thought his own hands pure enough to convey the tribute, and on a bloodless altar he laid his elegant oblation. Abel was thankful also; but besides the fruit of the ground, he brought the firstling of his flock, and with hands washed in its innocency, presented his more excellent, his more abundant and acceptable offering. And whilst the sacrifice of faith received the fiery sign, and vanished, fragrant in flames of heaven's own kindling, the mellow heap of corn and glossy fruit, the Deist's offering, remained unnoticed and untouched. "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." That offering alone arrests the eye of God which is laid on Abel's altar.

The grand ultimatum of the Christian economy is just to evoke abundant thanksgivings. And with this end in view, it has provided at once the mightiest topic and the

[1] Eph. v. 20. [2] 1 Peter ii. 5.

fittest ministers—the unspeakable gift and the royal priesthood. And a believer is never so truly what his Lord would have him to be, nor so like what he shall hereafter be; he never brings more glory to God, nor does more to commend the Gospel, than when others see in his spirit and demeanour, in what he gives, and what he says, and what he does, a living sacrifice, a holocaust of praise. "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

In the hope of promoting this most desirable grace, I would mention—

I. Some hindrances to a thankful spirit.

II. Some topics or materials for thanksgiving.

III. Some appropriate expressions of Christian gratitude.

I. Some Christians are not eminent for thankfulness. They are on the right side; but they have scarcely got the right spirit. Their complainings and murmurings are a deep spot on their Christian character, or rather a thick veil over it. Their heavenly citizenship could never be gathered from their benign and joyful mien, or from their cordial thankful words; for even with the cup of salvation in their hand, you never hear them asking, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his gifts?"

Three things mainly hinder Christians from being thankful,—selfishness, peevishness, and heedlessness.

Some are very selfish. Unless the blessing alight on their actual self, it matters not where it comes down. It

can occasion no gladness to them. They cannot joy in beholding the faith of other men. They cannot exult in beholding the order of other Churches. They do not glorify God for the graces of their believing brethren. The husbandman who sees a cloud melting over the adjacent fields, while not a drop comes down on his own thirsty furrows, is more likely to envy his favoured neighbour than to indulge in patriotic congratulations; and so when a blessing comes down on neighbour Christians or neighbour Churches, there are some who, instead of indulging that wise congratulation which of all things would be the likeliest to bring the blessing to themselves, instead of rejoicing with the patriotism and public spirit of a citizen of Zion, exulting in the general good, they grudge as if they lost what other members of the body get; and by a most unlovely selfishness, defraud themselves of that joy which no man could keep from them—the joy of rejoicing with them that do rejoice,—the joy of admiring the wonderful work of God. There are some so grievously selfish, that they take as matters of right, or as things of course, every good and perfect gift; and being little accustomed to view all things in the Surety, viewing themselves more frequently from the little hill of their own self-love, than from the great mountain of God's free grace, no gift is so great as to surprise them, no mercy is so amazing as to make them thankful. Like the Caspian Sea, which has some unseen way of disposing of its waters, so that whatever rains come down, and whatever rivers flow in, its great gulf never fills, and never a rill runs out from it again; so there is a greedy, all-devouring selfishness,

which, whatever rivers of pleasure flow into it, and whatever mighty bursts of heaven-descended bounty exhaust their fulness over it, always contrives to dispose of the whole in the caverns and subterraneous passages of its capacious egotism—the vast *mare internum* of self, without one drop overflowing in kindness to man, or gratitude to God. And if the sudden advent of some unhoped-for or overwhelming mercy stagger them into a moment's tenderness, they recover their presence of mind before they are betrayed into the liberality of imprudent gratitude, or the vehement expressions of an over-ardent thankfulness.

Others, who are not so remarkable for sordid selfishness, are of a peevish, complaining temper. Unless a man be changed in the spirit of his mind, he cannot belong to Christ. It is the work of the transforming Spirit to change the temper in making all things new; and in the majority of instances the change is very perceptible. The churl becomes bountiful, and the murmurer grows thankful. But the change is sometimes very slow, and seldom, in all its details, complete. And it is sad enough that when the box is alabaster and the ointment precious, this dead fly should spoil it all; when the man is a Christian, and his qualities those of substantial worth, that this bad temper should diffuse an odour of repulsiveness round him. We have, however, only to do with the fact and its evil influence,—the fact that some good men are of a fretful temper, and its evil effect in making them unthankful. Just as there are some instances of ingenious gratitude, making the most of scanty mercies, and ex-

tracting materials of thanksgiving from subjects the most unpromising; so there is an ingenious fretfulness, surprising you by its dexterity in detecting flaws, its industry in embittering its own comforts, and wearying you by its pertinacious fault-finding. If the house be commodious and well-furnished, the situation is bad. If your friend be judicious and affable and kind, it availeth you nothing, for he is so busy that you do not see him half so often as you would. If the book be scriptural and original, and ever so impressive, you throw it aside with a shudder, because it contains some expressions at war with your rules of criticism. In the First Book of Kings, we read (ix. 10-13), "And it came to pass at the end of twenty years, when Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the Lord and the king's house, that then King Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. And Hiram came out from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him; and they pleased him not. And he said, What cities are these which thou hast given me, my brother? And he called them the land of Cabul (margin, *dirty* or *displeasing*), unto this day." Now, without waiting to inquire whether the conduct of Solomon on this occasion was right or wrong, handsome or unhandsome, we have no hesitation in saying that Hiram was neither gracious nor wise. Even had the cities not come up to his expectation—and perhaps the misfortune lay in his expectation being too high—there was no need to vilify them, and hand down to posterity a memorial of his own spleen. But some men's lot is always cast in the land of Cabul. There is something dirty or displeasing in all

their mercies. They find a crook in every field, a drawback on every comfort, a bitter in every sweet. They can get nothing to their mind, nothing that comes up to their idea, neither a church, nor a minister, nor a Christian friend. And just as they are sullen and dissatisfied in the midst of ordinances, they are fretful at their own firesides. And just as God never gave them a mercy yet where their perversity did not discover more cause for grumbling than for gratitude, so, were they entering heaven itself with this hankering, discontented spirit, they would write Cabul on the very gates of Paradise.

Many are unthankful from sheer inadvertency. They are surrounded with blessings, but from pure heedlessness they do not perceive the open hand whence all have issued. They shut themselves out of the rich enjoyments included in the very exercise of gratitude, by not observing the countless objects on which that gratitude might be exercised. They are neither proud nor perverse it may be, but of a light inconsiderate turn, enjoying the good things which God has given, happy and cheerful in the use of them, but not connecting them with the bounteous Giver, and so not thankful. Gratitude does not depend on the amount of mercies received, but on the amount of mercies known and prized. And some are incomparably more quick-sighted in discerning and ingenious in detecting mercies than others are. A man may possess an estate and be little alive to its intrinsic worth. From ignorance or incuriosity, he may look on it as good for nothing, till a stranger comes and reveals to him its value. "This barren shaly rock overlies a bed of fuel.

That poisonous spring, of which the cattle may not drink, is itself a promise of plenty, for it shows that out of these hills thou mayest dig brass. These coarse, unsightly shells are the casket which contain the pearl. And even those heaps of rotting sea-weed may be rendered a source of occupation to your people and of riches to yourself." And many a man has the sources of boundless happiness and gratitude all at his feet, but owing to mere heedlessness the well is hid. Many a man whose average enjoyment amounts to little more than a duller sort of misery; many a Christian whose thankfulness is a conscientious effort rather than a spontaneous emotion, his peace might flow like a river, and his praises rush in a mighty stream, if he only had a prompt and observant eye, if he were only eager to discover and alert to notice his multitude of mercies. And this brings us to our second head.

II. Materials for thankfulness.

There is no better plan for suggesting these than to fix our regards on some one who was eminent for the grace of thankfulness, and then to ascertain what those mercies were which made his thanks abound. And having ascertained them, it will be for each to consider how far the counterpart mercies have been bestowed on himself. In looking over the Bible, the most eminent example of a thankful spirit which occurs to us is the sweet singer of Israel. His was a heart so full, that the least mercy made it overflow; and when it overflowed it was gratitude of a peculiarly intense and generous kind, such as fills the

golden vials of the four-and-twenty elders.[1] There was a holy skill, a Divine exuberance in King David's gratitude. Nothing came amiss to it, but, like the fire which transmutes rotten wood and dingy coal to light and flame, the fire of David's devotion turned his hardships into blessings, and his sorrows into songs of thanksgiving. For instance, when he had taken refuge with the King of Gath, hungry and weary, and hunted for his life, he had not been long in his house till he found that the king intended to kill him. Saul lay waiting for him, and Achish drove him out to Saul. So David arose, and marched along, singing blithely, "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together."[2] And long afterwards, when death laid his hand upon him, and the once ruddy countenance was deep-lined and mortal pale, he cast a wistful glance round his dwelling, and though it reminded him of many an awful sin and many stunning events in his family's history, amidst its dreariness, a sense of obligation still survived, and he gathered up his languid strength to say: "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." It was the faint Amen which closed the hallelujah of his thankful life, and told that he was of the same mind still as when in sprightlier days he sang, "The Lord is my Shepherd. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of

[1] Rev. v. 8, 9. [2] Psalm xxxiv

my life." So far there is foundation for Izak Walton's quaint conclusion, "that though the Prophet David was guilty of many of the most deadly sins, yet he was said to be a man after God's own heart, because he abounded more with thankfulness than any other that is mentioned in Holy Scripture, as may appear in his Book of Psalms; where there is such a commixture of his confessing of his sins and unworthiness, and such thankfulness for God's pardon and mercies, as did make him to be accounted, even by God himself, to be a man after his own heart."[1]

What, then, were the things which chiefly awakened

[1] *The Angler*, b. i. ch. xxi. Perhaps it owes somewhat of its charm to the friend with whom I always associate it, as having first called my attention to it; but that chapter of the *Complete Angler* seems to me a well-spring of as healthy and thankful emotion as any passage in our English authorship. It begins to this effect:—

"Well, scholar, having now taught you to paint your rod, and we having still a mile to Tottenham Cross, I will, as we walk towards it, in the cool shade of this sweet honeysuckle hedge, mention to you some of the thoughts and joys that have possessed my soul since we two met together. And these thoughts shall be told you, that you may join with me in thankfulness to the Giver of every good and perfect gift for our happiness. And, that our present happiness may appear to be the greater, and we the more thankful for it, I will beg you to consider with me, how many do, even at this very time, lie under the torment of the gout, and the toothache, etc.; and this we are free from. And every misery that I miss is a new mercy; and therefore let us be thankful. There have been, since we met, others that have met disasters of broken limbs; some have been blasted, others thunder-stricken; and we have been freed from these, and all those many other miseries that threaten human nature; let us therefore rejoice and be thankful. Nay, which is a far greater mercy, we are free from the insupportable burthen of an accusing, tormenting conscience,—a misery that none can bear; and therefore let us praise Him for His preventing grace, and say, Every misery that I miss is a new mercy. Nay, let me tell you, there be many that have forty times our estates, that would give the greatest part of it to be healthful and cheerful like us, who, with the expense of a little money, have ate and drank, and laughed, and angled, and sung, and slept securely, and rose next day, and cast away care; and sung and laughed, and angled again; which are blessings rich men cannot purchase with all their money."

David's gratitude? To enumerate all would be to recapitulate the psalms of praise. We shall only specify three or four.

1. Personal salvation.—There is a joy which many here have felt—the joy of returning health. The Lord had brought you very low, so low that nobody expected you would rise again, and you did not greatly care. You were so sick at heart that life had no attractions for you. Your soul abhorred the very things it loved before. They had to stop the music in the streets, the din so distressed you. Your little sister brought you a few flowers from the garden, but you asked her to put them away, for their fragrance sickened you. Some one offered to read you a chapter, and you gave them a listless consent, but you could not attend to a single verse, and soon said, "That will do." But the Lord raised you up again. Do you remember the first time you breathed the open air, when you were strong enough to cross the threshold again? It was quite an ordinary day to other people. The shopman stood behind his counter, the student was poring on his book, the smith was hammering at his forge, and noticed nothing remarkable about the day. And when neighbours met, they said to one another, as words of course, "A pleasant day." They saw nothing extraordinary about it; but it was a wonderful day to you. You just felt as if it were a day that God had newly made—as if He had on purpose breathed a new freshness into the air, and scattered on the earth a handful of heaven's own sunshine. The commonest things had an uncommon look. They had a friendly look—a happy, thankful look. They all seemed

to be singing the 148th Psalm—"Fruitful trees and all cedars; beasts and all cattle; creeping things and flying fowl," were all praising God, for you yourself were praising. And as you hearkened to the merry tune of the evening bird, and the piping tones of the bee hurrying home with his last burden, and the chorus gush of winds and waters, your swelling heart kept time to their hosannah, and your tumult of ecstasy almost threw your feeble frame into a fever again.

But there is a joy more Elysian still, and it, too, is the joy of returning health—the joy of a forgiven sinner when the Holy Spirit first seals the pardon on his soul. To some, this joy comes so gradually, and with such wise abatements, that they cannot date its dawn, nor say when that joy was full. But others can. You were a sin-sick, wretched man. The Spirit of God, unperceived by you, was working in your heart, and had convinced you of your guilt. You had no desire for anything; you had no courage to pray; you took the Bible in your hand, but had scarcely heart to open it; you expected nothing there; and you wondered why other people were so happy, for, in your desolate bosom, all was dark despair. You were almost afraid to shut your eyes and take your needful rest, for you did not know but you might awake in hell; and though you put up an earnest cry for mercy, you felt as if God had not heard that cry. These were dismal days. But they are over now. The true light shone. You saw a sin-bearing Saviour. You saw God's reconciled countenance in the face of the Incarnate Son. You had peace with God. You were no longer averse to pray, for God

was your Father. You were no longer reluctant to open the Bible, for that Bible was good news to you. You were no longer terrified to sleep, for you could sleep in Jesus. Your heart was so full of joy, because you felt that God was at peace with you, that you felt at peace with everything, and called on the dumb creatures to help you to praise the Lord. Your gladness found outlet, and scarcely found it, in crying, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies: . . . As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. . . . Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominions: bless the Lord, O my soul." These were David's feelings when he felt himself a forgiven sinner—feelings which burst in on him again in all their freshness and force each time that he realized the same affecting mercy anew.[1] Ah, brother! are you a forgiven sinner? Are you accepted in the Beloved? And has your heart not danced as David's did? Has not your glory waked, and your soul and all that is within you been stirred up to bless His holy name?

2. The Bible.—In the days of King David the Bible was a scanty book; yet he loved it well, and found daily wonders in it. Genesis, with its sublime narration of how God made the worlds, with its glimpses of patriarchal piety, and dark disclosures of gigantic sin; Exodus,

[1] Ps. xxxii.; li. 15, etc.

with its glorious marchings through that great wilderness, its thrilling memorials of Jehovah's outstretched arm, and the volumes of the written law; Leviticus, through whose flickering vistas David's eye discerned the shadows of better things to come; Numbers, with its natural history of the heart of man; and Deuteronomy, with its vindication of the ways of God; Joshua and Judges, with their chapters of providence, their stirring incidents and peaceful episodes; the memoirs of Job, so fraught with spiritual experience; and the domestic annals of Ruth, which told to her grandson such a tale of Divine foreknowledge, and love, and care, all converging on himself, or rather on David's Son, and David's Lord;—these were David's Bible. And, brethren, whatever wealth you have, remember that David desired his Bible beyond all his riches. So thankful was he for such a priceless possession, that he praised God for its righteous judgments seven times a day. But you have got an ampler Bible —a Bible with Psalms and Prophets in it—a Bible with Gospels and Epistles. How do you love that law? How often have you found yourself clasping it to your bosom as the man of your counsel? How often have your eyes glistened over a brightening page, as one who had found great spoil? How often have you dwelt on its precious promises till they evolved a sweetness which made you marvel? How many times have you praised the Lord for the clearness of its light, the sanctity of its truth, and the sureness of its immortality?

3. Another blessedness of David's life was devout and congenial society. Among his friends were the saints in

the earth, the excellent, in whom was all his delight. In this respect he felt that the "lines were fallen to him in pleasant places;"[1] and for these gifts from the Lord,—those friends in the Lord—the king was grateful. He had, for instance, Nathan, so faithful and honest, and affectionate withal, taking the Lord's side, and speaking the Lord's mind in every matter, for his soul's sake still lingering near his master, when it seemed as if that soul were lost, and when it had been as natural for Nathan to take his leave; leal to his fallen friend, but no less loyal to his heavenly Lord. He had Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, men whom David loved because they loved the ark of God. He had Barzillai, the Gileadite, a brother born for adversity, or rather a friend whom affliction brought to view, like those brave ocean-birds that walk forth upon the swell when seas are waxing fierce, and timorous wings are wending home. And he once had Jonathan—Jonathan who had a word in season for every sorrow, and a welcome ready for every joy;—Jonathan, who understood the full meaning of David's words, and could still perceive the meaning of his friend when labouring words could do no more;—Jonathan, whose tastes and affections so coincided with David's own that like two cloven tallies brought together, their souls, their minds suited one another—fitted and filled up mutually, and coalescing in all the freshness of early life, clave to one another. Have you got such a friend? A Nathan faithful in his kindness, and wise withal? A Barzillai, a friend in need, a benefactor in the day of poverty or

[1] Ps. xvi. 3, 6.

persecution, or a comforter in the hour of sorrow? A praying friend, like Abiathar; or one mighty in the Scriptures, like Zadok the scribe? Above all, a friend, like Jonathan, with whom it is sweet to take counsel, one who makes the Sabbath more lightsome, and the road to the sanctuary shorter in his company; who makes the Bible itself more memorable by his quoting it—the throne of grace more dear by his fellowship in prayer—and the Saviour himself better known by what he has told you of Him? If you have got such a friend, a gift from God, your lot is pleasant; be thankful and bless the Lord.

And bless him none the less if the gift has gone back to God. Few mercies call for more thankfulness than a friend safe in heaven; a friend who bore the image of the First-born so plainly, that you doubt not he has joined the Church of the First-born in heaven; a friend who fought so good a fight, and kept the faith so well, that you now can see him wear the crown of glory. It is not every one that overcometh. Some ran well, but have been hindered; and when you think how uphill is the road, and how many are the adversaries; how heavy, too, the encumbering weights; they are well off who have reached the goal. Some worldly men are thankful —and rightly thankful—if their friends have gone down with stainless names to honoured graves. But this is poor cause for gratitude compared with yours, who have friends that went up with white robes to immortal crowns. You yourselves have sometimes been thankful when, after days of eager waiting, and nights when the rioting tempest

kept you anxiously wakeful, the telegraph announced the vessel home which conveyed your brother or your son. And afloat on this world's waters—embarked on that profession of which so many now make shipwreck—often beyond your eye—perhaps beyond your influence—with all the cross-currents of interest and passion to contend with—with the great gulf-stream of worldly-mindedness bearing in on them, and winds of fierce temptation—the power of the air assailing them; the best moment—for it is the moment which should supersede many vexing thoughts, as it answers many prayers—is the moment that brings them home. However pleasant in his life a Jonathan may be, it is so far better for himself that you have much to be thankful for who have a friend dear as your own soul—a Jonathan in heaven.

4. But it was not only for obvious mercies, but for mercies in the disguise of sorrow, that this man of God was grateful.[1] These are the topics which give scope to the holy ingenuity of loyal saints; and as they are the severest trials of faith, so they are the noblest triumphs of gratitude. "In everything give thanks;" for "everything is working for good to them that love God." You were strong and vigorous, and rejoiced in active exertions, and had just planned an enterprise which you were sure would be useful, and which you were hopeful you might execute, when sickness came. A notable break in your health occurred, and you can never hope to be the same active man again. Well, but this is the will of God, even your sanctification; and without the sickness you

[1] Ps. xxxiv.; cxix. 65, 67, 71.

would not be sanctified wholly. There are lessons of patience and submission, yea, and of gratitude, which are best learned when the head is low. There is a mellowing of the man which is best effected in the cloudy autumn weather of weakness or decline; a softening of the spirit, an enlargement of experience, a meeker on-waiting on God, a weaning from the world and a ripening of faith; in short, the whole of that maturing process which in believing men constitutes the meetness for glory. If you cannot be thankful for the pain, the sickness, the restraint, be thankful for the peaceful fruits.—You were rich or independent, and were purposing to do some good with your money, when, lo! your wealth took wing, and like a scared eagle, you saw it spread its pinions and fly away till it dwindled in distance out of sight, and you have little hope that it will alight on your field again. Perhaps not; and, like everything we lose, there is a pang in seeing it go. But there are lessons to be learned from its sudden flight. You meant to do good with it. And so David meant to build the temple. But whilst David was projecting a temple on Zion the Spirit of God was rearing a more beautiful temple in David's soul. And a copestone was wanting—absolute resignation. And so the Lord denied to David the thing nearest David's heart, and David acquiesced; and in that submission God got more glory than he could have got from David's projected house. And has the reverse of fortune no alleviations? Are you not surprised to find how independent of mere money peace of conscience is? and how much happiness can be condensed into the humblest home? A cottage

will not hold the bulky furniture and sumptuous accommodations of a mansion; but if God be there, a cottage will hold as much happiness as might stock a palace. It is with wealth as with a water reservoir. When the drought has dried it up, you find in the deserted bed things that were lost years ago, and curious, interesting things which but for this circumstance would never have been known. So, where it is a believing, contented mind, it will discover, when the flood of fortune has drained away, in the deserted channel, unsuspected sources of enjoyment and lost things,—feelings which long since vanished, simple pleasures and primitive emotions which abundance had overflowed.—You had a friend, a parent, or other beloved relative, on whose arm you hoped to lean far through the wilderness. That parent died at the moment he was most needed; that arm was broken when the road grew roughest and the wilderness most weary. Well, perhaps it made you think more of an arm which never grows feeble,—of a Friend that never fails. You were of a passive, leaning tendency,—doing nothing except as you were prompted, and deciding nothing except it was decided for you. This made you up and doing; this drove you out upon the world; sent you back on your own resources; nay, shut you up to an all-sufficient God. And you are conscious now, that but for that bitter, yet timely loss, you had passed through life in the idolatry of creature admiration and in the listlessness of creature trust; without energy, without activity, almost without separate personality, and assuredly not been where you this day are. Afflictions, wisely considered and skilfully

improved, are blessings in disguise; and though they be not in themselves joyous, but grievous, and though it is not as in themselves, but for their blessed consequences, that the gratitude is due;—be it the removal of the guide you least could want, because he walked closest with God; be it the disappearance from your dwelling of one who shed over it its most sacred light; be it the vanishing from your view of some brief loan, the recall of the smiling babe before he has had time to sin after the similitude of Adam's transgression; nay, be it sorrow sadder still, a sorrow in which there is little hope or none:—there still is something from which a thankful heart may elicit gratitude, for there is still something from which the Holy Spirit can elicit sanctification.[1]

My dear friends, I cannot enumerate all the sweet mercies for which you should be thankful; the *personal mercies*, a sound mind and a healthy body; restorations

[1] Another friend—and there are few kinder things that friends can do than to bring one another acquainted with the memorable passages in the books which they have read—once awakened some good thoughts in the mind of the writer, by reading a few sentences from *Watson on the Art of Divine Contentment*. It is a quaint, kindly book, full of homely sense and scriptural wisdom. Its author belonged to the class of Joshua and Caleb. He neither despised the goodly land, nor murmured because of the way. And those who are apt to look at the dark side of things cannot do better than read his pithy little *Treatise*:—

"Compare your condition with Christ's upon earth. What a poor, mean condition was he pleased to be in for us! He was contented with anything. 'For ye know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ; that although he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor.' He could have brought down a house from heaven with him, or challenged the high places of the earth; but he was contented to live poor that we might die rich. The manger was his cradle, the cobwebs his canopy. He who is now preparing mansions for us in heaven had none for himself on earth. He came *in forma pauperis*; 'who, being in the form of God, took upon him the form of a servant.' Jesus Christ was in a low condition; he was never high but when he was lifted up upon the cross, and that was his humility."

from sickness; preservations in imminent peril; a good education, abundance of books, and, perhaps, some leisure to read them; a competent share of the good things of this life, a home, food, raiment, occasional rest and recreation, the enlivening of a journey, and the enlightenment of travel;—*family mercies*, parents that were kind when you were helpless, and wise when you were foolish; the endearing associations of early days; the gentleness of kindred, who, if a little more remote, were scarcely less tender than father or mother were; the amenities and joys of your present home; the household lamp and the household hearth, with all the fond familiar faces on which they shine; the voices which make blithe music in your dwelling; the lives which you have got back from the gates of the grave, and those glorified ones whom you would not wish to bring back; with all those numberless in-door delights, those visits of kindness, and advents of gladness, and solacements of sympathy, which He, whose home was heaven, loved to witness or create in the homes of earth;—*spiritual mercies*, the Bible, the Sabbath, the house of prayer, the closet, the family altar, the great congregation, prayer-meetings, communion seasons, psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, Christian friends; perhaps a conscience void of offence towards man, and at peace with God through Jesus Christ; perhaps a victory over some temptation; perhaps progress in some grace; perhaps answers to prayer; along with what may either already be your own, or may as assuredly be made your own, as the Bible is already yours,—the Comforter, peace in believing, hope in dying, a sanctified grave and a joy-

ful resurrection, a home in heaven, a blood-bought harp, a golden crown, the inheritance of all things. These are a few of his mercies; but, oh! how great is the sum of them!

III. Appropriate expressions of Christian gratitude.

1. Thanksgiving should occupy a prominent place in devotion, whether secret or social. For this purpose it were well to note God's mercies, to mark the return of prayers, to treasure up all the pleasant incidents in your outward history, and all God's gracious dealings with your souls; and he who does this will find fresh materials for gratitude every day.

2. Recount God's mercies to others. In this way you will confer a double benefit. You will quicken your own soul to increasing fervour; and, by speaking good of His name, you may kindle the love and gratitude of your friends and neighbours. A thankful Christian is a general benefactor; his cheerful countenance diffuses a true report of that religion, a great part of which is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.[1] The law of kindness which dwells on his lips goes far to neutralize the acerbity and peevishness of the murmuring professors around him: and the atmosphere of serenity and joy in which he moves reminds you of that world where all the labours are labours of love, where all the movements are a harmony, and each service is eucha-

[1] "On the top of a coach, in a heavy rain, a young woman who sat next him was much annoyed. Samuel was happy in his soul, audibly blessing the Lord for all his mercies. When his neighbour fretted, he exclaimed, 'Bless the Lord, it is not a shower of fire and brimstone from heaven!' This sentence took effect; and he had the happiness to learn, that in consequence of his behaviour and conversation, she became a steady convert to Christianity." —*Life of Samuel Hick, the Village Blacksmith*, p. 233.

ristical, where each radiant aspect itself is praise, and every down-weighed countenance, and every uplifted eye, is saying, "Thou art worthy."

3. Sing praise. "O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him; sing psalms unto him." Few things are better fitted to dispel the evil spirit of censoriousness, selfishness, and sullenness, than heart-sung hymns of thanksgiving. Besides, adoration and thanksgiving are the proper end and highest order of psalmody. It may be well to sing our own sorrows and our own desires, but it is better still to sing God's praise.

4. Embody your gratitude in offerings of thankfulness. These are the only oblations for which room is left in our new economy. Sin-offerings and trespass-offerings have passed away. There is no place for them now. But free-will-offerings and thank-offerings remain.[1] The Gospel

[1] The substance of this tract was originally delivered in the form of a sermon at Manchester, and then in London, on behalf of the Wesleyan Missionary Society. On such an occasion, it will be allowed that the subject was at least natural and appropriate. Methodism has done more than any other element to infuse a joyous and eucharistical spirit into modern Christianity;—a spirit which finds other outlets besides the evangelic gladness of its psalmody. In the contributions to its Mission Fund we find frequent entries like the following:—

An Anonymous Thank-offering to God for the Mercies of 1841,	£20	0	0
Anonymous Token of Gratitude for Twenty-three Anniversaries of a Wedding-day,	23	0	0
Commemoration of a Friend's Birth-day,	50	0	0
Family Thank-offering,	40	0	0
Family at Grimsby, in memory of a deceased and affectionate Parent,	15	0	0
Thank-offering from Persons embarking in Business,	10	0	0
Thank-offering on New Year's Day 1840,	10	0	0

When the sermon above referred to was published, by far the most gratifying criticism which met the author's eye, was an acknowledgment of fifty pounds, which some one, after perusing it, had presented to the London Missionary Society.

has left ample scope for these. Its joyful dispensation is essentially eucharistical; its glad tidings should awake glad feelings, and these glad feelings spontaneously express themselves in sacrifices of thankfulness. It is in this way that the Great Author of the Gospel has stamped it with a self-diffusive tendency—inspiring with a joy unspeakable those who receive it in loyalty and love; and then, through their overflowing hearts and open hands, transmitting it over widening circuits, till a regenerate world has felt the leaven of its heavenly life.[1] The genius of the Gospel is liberality. Itself the most amazing instance of the Divine munificence, its advent into a human soul is marked by an instantaneous expansion of its feelings and affections. When it comes in its fulness and tells in its power, the churl becomes bountiful, the miser turns out a philanthropist, and the sluggard issues forth a sleepless evangelist. And so invariably does this activity indicate the energy within—so sure a dynamometer of spiritual vitality is the amount of what a man can do or give for Jesus' sake—that in order to ascertain how freely any one has received, or how much any one has been loved, you have only to ascertain how freely he can give, or how long he can labour without fainting. The love which does not lead to labour will soon die out; and the thankfulness which does not embody itself in sacrifices, is already changing to ingratitude.

It is distressing to see reluctant or stinted offerings laid on the altar of the God of love; and perhaps it is better not to give at all, than to give grudgingly. The Lord

[1] Matt. xiii. 33.

loveth a cheerful giver; and none of His people need ever lack that grateful motive which makes a cheerful gift. Were you sick, and has the Lord restored your health; and like Hezekiah, are you living on a second lease of life? Were you far away in a foreign land, and across the dangerous deep, has the arm of providential mercy brought you home? Have new wells burst on you in the valley of Baca, and new songs cheered you in your house of pilgrimage? Have you found new friends, or new sweetness in the old? Has a brighter blaze burst from the domestic hearth, or a richer zest been infused into the household cup? Have you cause for rejoicing in those that remain, or a hope full of immortality regarding those that are gone? Then commemorate the mercy in a gift of gratitude. Or, should all other topics fail—should you look back on weary months and find no spot of your earthly journey bright enough to deserve an *Ebenezer*, then think of the Bible, and the Gospel ministry, and the Great Comforter, and heaven; and if everything else should fail, cast your gift into the treasury, with this motto round it, "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift."

1 2

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